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Mr. Kelley from Kalamazoo

A Farce in Three Acts

By
MACPHERSON JANNEY

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
1912

PS 3519
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1912

Mr. Kelley from Kalamazoo

CHARACTERS

CLARENCE PRENTICE, *more or less a gentleman of leisure.*
HENRY TETLOW, *his uncle, an impressario.*
RUFE KING, *his brother-in-law.*
THE REV. ERNEST FREY, *rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish.*
TED STRONG, *late of the St. Louis "Nationals."*
IGNATZ DEMAREST ROGERS, *a syncopated genius.*
BARTON, *butler at the Tetlows'.*
JIM, *a policeman.*
MADELAINE SANDERSON, *Tetlow's ward.*
MARY KING, *his niece.*
LESLIE HILL, *late of the "Folies Bergeres."*
Students of Raeton College.

SCENE.—Tetlow's home, Raeton.
TIME.—The opening night of college.

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mercy mary 11 '12
Rect. A.M. 28 Oct. 30.

Mr. Kelley from Kalamazoo

ACT I

SCENE.—*Parlor in* HENRY TETLOW'S *house. A large, handsomely furnished room, fireplace* R. C., *doorway entering from hall back* R., *entrances at front* R., *back* L., *and front* L.; *French window back* L.; *large sofa in front of fireplace, table front* L., *with drop light; upright piano back* C., "*Victrola*" R., *in front of fireplace; back* R. *desk with telephone, and hat-rack;* L. C. *large red screen, tea table and chairs, and hanging mirror.*

(*As the curtain rises, the stage is in darkness, except for a faint glow from the fireplace, and an intermittent red glare visible through the French window, which stands open. Sounds symbolic of the higher education are heard without; the murmur of many voices, near and distant, muffled cheers conflicting with one another, snatches of time-honored songs chorused by hoarse masculine voices, the whole more or less in discord. The rattle of a drum is heard dying in the distance, and the glare of colored lights grows dimmer gradually. A few seconds after the curtain rises the telephone bell rings, and persists until* BARTON *enters front* L.)

BAR. (*crossing* R. *quickly, bumping into table*). Ho, dem hit! No lights! (*Takes down receiver.*) 'Ello!—Yes,—yes, sir,—hit's Barton, sir.—No, sir, 'e's not at 'ome.—No, sir; not for the past week, sir.—Hall right, sir.—No message?—Very good, sir.—Four six three Main.—Good hevening, sir. (*Puts down receiver, crosses* L. *to window and closes it.*) My word! Wot a confusion! One can 'ardly 'ear one's self speak! (*Looks out of window.*) Hit's well the master's not at 'ome,—hit upsets 'im near as much as a telegram! (*Pauses; gasps.*) Ho, my word! That telegram! (*Bustles forward and turns up light, hunts through his pockets, finally pro-*

ducing a yellow envelope.) Ho, dear me! And hit's been 'ere since yesterday! And Mr. King, 'e being so particular, too. Oh! good 'eavens!

(*The door opens;* BAR. *convulsively grabs at the light and turns it out;* RUFE KING *enters back* L.)

KING. Hello, what's wrong with the lights? I thought—— See here, who's that there? Oh, Barton? Well, why the deuce don't you turn up the lights?

BAR. (*turning on light*). Yes, sir; Hi—— Hit was hout of order, sir, and Hi was only hexperimenting a bit, sir.

KING. Oh, I see. Well, you'd better let me do all the experimenting in that line; a hundred and ten volts would finish you pretty quick. Any mail?

BAR. No, sir.

KING. Strange; I haven't heard at all from Uncle Hen! (*The noise outside is increasing every moment, seeming to have the house as its goal.* KING *crosses back* L.) Good thing he isn't here for these goings on. By Jove, but they're whooping it up! Barton, where's Mrs. King?

BAR. Hin the library, Hi think, sir.

KING. Thanks. (*Crosses* R.) Oh, I suppose Mrs. King told you to hold dinner until half-past eight? Good! I hardly think Mr. Tetlow would come without letting us know, but we will wait till the eight-fifteen is in.

BAR. Very well, sir. (*Exit* KING, R.) Ho, my! Wot a relief! And now to hexplain that telegram! Lord! Hi'll 'ave to arsk the missis wot to do! (*He crosses* L.) My, wot a racket! [*Exit,* L.

(*The noise outside has increased until it has centered directly in front of the house; at that moment it appears to swerve off, and move on and away. The French window softly opens, and* CLARENCE PRENTICE *crawls in on his hands and knees. He wears a long overcoat, and a derby pulled over his ears; as he stands erect a shower of leaves falls from his clothes. He glances cautiously about, then turns and looks for a moment out of the window, finally shaking his fist vindictively at the street without.*)

PREN. Howl! Howl! You young barbarians! you feeble-minded, overgrown children! Perdition take you and all your

ancestors and your blessed Alma Mater! (*He pauses, and pulls his hat off; a shower of leaves falls out.*) The idiots! (*He comes forward, taking off his coat, and shaking leaves all over the room.*) By all the saints, the next time you catch me burrowing in a pile of leaves like a blamed squirrel! (*He throws coat on a chair, and leans against the table, drawing a long breath.*) Whew! But they nearly had me! Another minute, and —— Ugh! (*He shudders, then walks around the room.*) Well, here I am at last; but hanged if I don't think it's out of the frying-pan into the fire! If only the old gent's away, or I can get hold of Rufe first; but —— Oh, the devil; here comes some one! Back to the nest!

(*He turns out the light, grabs coat, and starts for the window.* KING *enters* R.)

KING. Lights out again! Barton, you old rascal, what the ——!

PREN. Rufe!

(*He springs to the table and flashes on the light.*)

KING. Well, of all things! You old son of a gun!

(*They clasp hands, and begin to pump strenuously.*)

PREN. Say, but this is luck! Quick, Rufe; where's the old gent?

KING. Gone.—No, not dead; out of town. Been gone a week.

PREN. Oh, wonderful!

KING. But he may show up any minute. He's a trifle unreliable.

PREN. Oh, damn! But I've got my hooks on you first, so it's all right.

KING. Explain.

PREN. Oh, that's so, you're not wise to the situation; well, sit down. (*He sits on table;* KING *leans against fireplace.*) You see, I'm in a mess, as usual.

KING. *As* usual! What is it this time? Have you turned botanist?

PREN. Botanist, you imbecile?

KING. Because if you haven't, please don't mess up the house again with any more autumn scenery.

PREN. Huh! I see. Oh, don't worry; that's only a little

impromptu stage setting. Rufe, I've just escaped from the clutches of the worst gang of ruffians that ever ——!

(*His righteous anger surges up again, and he shakes his fist viciously at the window.*)

KING (*roaring with laughter*). So! The giddy sophs have been entertaining you? And since when have they taken to disturbing perfectly law-abiding citizens? I thought they confined their attentions to the verdant freshmen.

PREN. Ugh! They came near entertaining me, all right! But the whole trouble is, they've got a perfect right to, I suppose, according to their feeble-minded and misguided notions. You see,—well, maybe you'll think I'm crazy, but I'm one of those verdant freshmen myself!

KING (*thunderstruck*). You! You! Why ——!

(*He sinks on the sofa, overcome with howls of laughter.*)

PREN. All right, laugh, you old jackass; bray your voice out! But I don't see what's funny in a fellow's going to college!

KING (*recovering an instant*). But *you!* and at your age in life!—Oh, Lord! (*Succumbs.*)

PREN. Oh, the devil take my age, and you, too! Will you listen till I get through? Do you suppose I *wanted* to go to any fool college, and get mixed up in early morning chapel and so on? It was a case of that, or a horrible alternative, or being disinherited by my fool of an uncle. I mean my other fool of an uncle.

KING. Oh-ho! So that's it, hey? Uncle Billiam has vetoed the rôle of the young squire of the manor? And what was the horrible alternative?

PREN. A consular berth, secured through one of his blessed political friends. A job upholding the glory and honor of my native land at three thousand per in—*Russia!*

KING. Russia? But where's the kick come in? Three thousand a year. Why, man, why the deuce didn't you grab the chance?

PREN. (*gravely*). My son! *If* you will consult a good atlas, a good *big* one, you will find that the town of Volodga is in the latitude of sixty-two north. And though an arctic existence may suit some people,—well, I'd rather buck the higher education.

KING. Um—I see. Well, I'm inclined to think that the government is to be congratulated on losing your services, if you're so thin-skinned that you can't stand a little hazing.

PREN. Hazing? Oh, the dickens with hazing! Wait till you hear how I've messed things. You see, since I had to do the college stunt, I thought I'd please Uncle Hen all I could, so I chose to come here. Well, he *was* tickled; and of course loaded me up with a lot of letters of introduction and such truck. Moreover, he wanted me to pledge myself to Zeta Epsilon; so like a fool I did, and he wrote all the members that I was coming. And then —— Oh, Lord!—then I *did* put my foot in it!

(*He jumps up, and walks excitedly about the room.*)

KING. Well, let's have it. I suppose you signed up with another frat.

PREN. Yes! Of course! Exactly! Oh, what an ass I am! Only, I didn't sign anything; but I gave my word of honor that I'd go Alpha Psi. Did you ever hear anything to equal it? And then, when I got out of the train, and saw the yelling crowds and the torches, suddenly I remembered my uncle and his letters and my sacred obligations to the Zeta Epsilons. After that, there was a lot of shooting stars and buzzing noises, and in the excitement I got loose and found my way to the bottom of the débris in your front yard. Oh, Lord! And the brutes got my suit-case, so they know who I am!

KING. But for heaven's sake, man, you can't be bound to any one but the Zeta Epsilons! You pledged yourself to them, so any subsequent promise is therefore null and void!

PREN. Oh, shut up, you and your law terms! You don't know anything about it, because, you see,—well —— Oh, confound it, I *can't* break my promise to go Alpha Psi! You see —— (*He pauses in confusion.*)

KING. Oh, yes; I see! I might have known it all along. Why didn't you tell me in the beginning? If there's a girl in the case ——

PREN. Yes, there *is* a girl in the case, and she's the best, and —— Oh, laugh, you grinning hyena; I don't care! I don't care! And if you think that I'm going to break my promise to her for you or any other blame fool, you're mighty mistaken!

(*In his excitement he shakes his fist violently in* KING'S *face.*)

KING. Oh, cool off, Pren! I don't want you to break any promises. Only you ought not to let your love affairs get you into trouble. It isn't worth while. You know you'll get over it in a week or two.

PREN. No, I won't, either! Why, hang it, man, I've already asked her to marry me!

KING. What? Ho, ho, ho! (*He goes into a fit of laughter.*) And did she accept?

PREN. No, worse luck!

KING. Good enough!

PREN. But she said that if I'd go Alpha Psi she'd consider the matter. See? Now how the deuce can you blame me for forgetting about my old fool of an uncle and his fool plans?

KING. Whew! Well, it's certainly all very harrowing; you've made a pretty sufficient mess of the business. And now what are you going to do? I suppose the first thing is to lay low until the initiation is over. That means you can't show yourself for twelve hours more; then no one can claim you till next term. But where do you propose to stay?

PREN. Why, here, you old cuckoo!

KING. Not a chance! Do you know that if you're seen within these doors, the butler has orders to eject you, by force if necessary? And that I'm seriously compromising myself by holding friendly confab with you?

PREN. Lord! I certainly do seem blessed with the most insane and unreasonable set of uncles that ever lived! Well, I suppose it *is* largely my fault. But the deuce! I *must* stay here! Come on, Rufe, be a sport, and help me. You say the old gent's away, and probably won't show up; nobody else knows me, except Mary, of course; and you can tell the bloodthirsty butler that I'm a friend from Kalamazoo selling gas ranges. I swear I'll lie low, and beat it the minute my time's up.

KING. Well, I guess it's pretty safe. But if Uncle Hen *should* turn up ——! All right; you wait here a minute. (*He goes to the door back* L., *and calls.*) Mary! Oh, Mary!

MARY KING (*from without, up-stairs*). Yes, dear; what is it?

KING. Come down here and entertain my company for a moment.

MARY. Very well; but who is it?

KING. Never mind; come down and find out. (*Turns to* PREN.) You good-for-nothing blockhead! You've worried your poor sister nearly to death with your family rows! But she'll be mighty glad to see you, just the same. Now I'll just drop down and casually inform Barton that my friend, Mr. Kelley, is visiting me. And don't you forget to talk with a brogue!

(*He goes out front* L.; PREN. *picks up hat and coat and hangs them up on hat-rack as* MARY *enters back* L.)

MARY. Oh, good-evening, Mr. —— Why,—Clarence!

(*She rushes across stage into his arms.*)

PREN. Hello, old girl! My, but I'm glad to see you!

MARY. You perfect darling! What on earth are you doing here? And how long are you going to stay?

(*They come forward and sit on the sofa.*)

PREN. Well, you know pretty well how long I'd remain on the premises if my dear Uncle Hennery were here. So my stay in this house is limited, but I'm going to be in Raeton all winter.

MARY. Glorious! And you never told me a word about it! Oh, Clarence, if you could only live with us! Why did you let Uncle Hen get so angry with you? If you'd only just given in to his wishes a little!

PREN. What! Marry a girl I'd never seen, just to please him? Why ——!

MARY. But you could have met her first, before you promised anything; and she's a perfect dear,—I know you'd ——

PREN. No, Mary, there's no use going over all that again; and not now especially. My dearest sister, I'm in love with the most wonderful girl that ever lived!

MARY. What; again?

PREN. No; at last! I've only known her for two days, but I'm going to marry her!

MARY. You silly boy! Who is she, and where did you meet her?

PREN. I met her on the train, in the observation car; and do you know, I don't even know her name yet!

MARY. Clarence! I'm shocked!

PREN. Oh, no, you're not! And just wait till you meet her! You see, she lives here somewhere in Raeton, and she's promised to let me know her address right away. (*Pauses.*) Only, confound it all, she doesn't know *my* name or address either!—Oh, well, I'll run across her somewhere!

MARY. Of all scatterbrains! And you actually imagine that you're going to marry this horrible creature?

PREN. I certainly do!

MARY. And I suppose she is equally certain.

PREN. That's just the trouble. She refused me!

MARY. Well, I should hope so! The very idea! Now, listen, Clarence; Uncle Hen's ward, Madelaine Sanderson ——

PREN. The girl I'm supposed to marry?

MARY. Exactly.

PREN. Good-night!

MARY. That's all very well; only don't say anything you'll ever regret. As I started to say, she's coming on from Boston in another week to spend the winter here, as she did last year; and you will have a chance to meet her, and then perhaps you won't oppose your uncle so stubbornly. Oh, Clarence, do *try* to like her! Won't you promise to be a good boy, and do as I ask?

PREN. (*taking her hand and patting it affectionately*). Yes, of course, of course; but don't expect anything. I'm in dead earnest about this other affair. In the meantime I'm in the deuce of a scrape. Mary, I've —— (*The door-bell rings.*) Lord; suppose that's Uncle Hen!

MARY. It can't be! He wouldn't ring!

PREN. That's all right; I'm not taking any chances. Quick; which way is Rufe's room?

MARY. Right at the top of the landing; the first room. Hurry, I hear Barton coming! Goodness, I forgot he mustn't see you! (PREN. *goes out quickly back* L.; *as he disappears*, BAR. *enters front* L., *and sees him go.*) Oh, dear! What shall I tell him?

BAR. (*pausing a moment and eyeing the door*). Beg pardon, but ——

MARY (*breathlessly*). Oh, Barton, I meant to tell you that a gentleman would be here to-night, Mr. Sumner, a singer who has come to see Mr. Tetlow on business!

BAR. Yes, ma'am. (*Aside.*) Hanother one!

[*Exit, back* R.

MARY (*going to table and arranging it nervously*). I wonder who it is; it *can't* be Uncle Hen! He'd surely have telegraphed! (*A pause.*)

MADELAINE SANDERSON (*off stage*). Here are the checks. Would you please, Barton? You're a dear!

MARY. Madelaine! Why ——!

(MAD. *enters back* R., *throws down wraps, and comes forward, arms outstretched.*)

MAD. Hello, dearest!

MARY. Madelaine! (*They embrace.*) For gracious' sake!

MAD. Aren't you surprised?

MARY. Surprised? I should *say* so! Where on earth did you drop from?

MAD. My dear, I've dropped *all* the way from St. Louis, right on top of you, without a word of warning! Now, aren't you overjoyed?

MARY. Overjoyed! But, goodness, why St. Louis? I thought you were in Boston!

MAD. I know. Dearest, positively, I've been around the world in the last week! I'll tell you all about it later. Just now, I'm simply dying to renovate myself. Isn't traveling perfectly terrible? Do tell me what room I'm to have! Wait! (*She goes quickly out into the hall, and returns with her suit-case. Outside a snatch of song is heard in the distance.*) Listen! Hear them singing! My, but it sounds good! Oh, my dear! Let me tell you! I've pledged the most splendid fellow to Alphi Psi; he's perfectly wonderful, and I'm quite ——

KING (*off stage*). Mary, where's Barton? (*He enters front* L.; *sees* MAD., *and stops dead.*) Why ——! On my word! (*He advances, and they shake hands.*)

MAD. Aren't you glad to see me?

KING. Glad! Well, I should say so! But ——

(*He looks inquiringly at his wife.*)

MARY. Don't look to me for an explanation; I'm as much in the dark as you are. Isn't it fine, though? (*To* MAD.) Dearie, just a moment and you can come.

(*She takes suit-case, and goes out back* L.)

KING. Well, how goes the world? You're looking fine.

MAD. I'm feeling fine, too. Oh, Rufe, I've had the most wonderful trip, and more experiences! Just think, Rufe; at last I've met my true affinity; the most splendid fellow! He came all the way from St. Louis with me; you know, we met on the train, and it was awfully romantic! Imagine; we don't even know each other's names yet! We agreed to keep them secret for the fun of it. And I've asked him to come and see me here; you won't mind, will you, Rufe?

KING. Of course not, if,—well, you're sure he's the right sort of fellow?

MAD. Why, of *course* he is; he's a perfect dear! And he asked me to marry him the very first day!

KING. Oh, good Lord! And did you say yes?

MAD. No-o; but I told him that I'd think it over *very* seriously. It was simply a case of love at first sight! Oh, I can hardly wait till I see him again! Rufe, *do* you think ——

MARY (*off stage*). Oh, Madelaine!

MAD. Yes, dear; I'm coming! (*She crosses back* R., *gathers up coat and wraps, and crosses* L., *talking as she goes.*) Goodness! I *hope* I haven't delayed dinner any! And Rufe, if a gentleman *should* by any chance call this evening, won't you please tell Barton ——

MARY (*off stage*). Madelaine?

MAD. Coming, dear!

(*Exit, back* L. KING *stands a moment looking after her, then comes forward and leans against the table, drawing a long breath.*)

KING. Whew! Well —— (*He pauses, reflectively.*) This certainly seems marked out for a particularly hectic evening! Here's my precious brother-in-law, caught between two fires, and hiding at this house, of all places, where, if his dear uncle catches him, he'll be everlastingly slain, and I'll be turned out for harboring him! And on top of that, in drops the irrepressible Madelaine, with a wild tale of a Pullman romance, evidently having forgotten that she has promised to marry the man of her guardian's choice, who, in turn, is the fugitive beneath our very roof! Oh, ye Gods! And I'm confoundedly certain that now it's started to rain, it's going to pour before it gets through! (*The door-bell rings.*) There! I knew it! I wonder what's coming next? If this Lothario of Madelaine's turns out to be impossible, as he very likely will, and if he

should turn up before Uncle Hen gets back, well —— (*The bell rings again.*) I wonder why Barton doesn't come! Oh, the deuce! He's gone for Madelaine's trunks! I'll have to welcome the next event on the program myself. (*He goes out back* R.; *in a moment he reënters, followed by* TED STRONG, *who wears a long, talkative overcoat, and a small derby on the back of his head. The derby has a dent in one side;* TED'S *tie and collar are badly disarranged.*) Right in here, if you please. Won't you take off your overcoat?

TED. Tanks! Wot's left of it! (*He removes coat, which* KING *takes. He is evidently a bit ruffled in temper as well as apparel.*) Say! Do youse hand out d' election night stuff t' every guy wot strikes dis burg?

KING. Why, no; this only happens to be the opening night of college, and ——

TED. Oh, dat's it, huh? Well, I'm glad youse put me wise, cuz next time I'd ha' swung on some o' those guys, see?

(*He viciously punches his hat into shape, then crosses front* L., *and arranges tie in front of mirror.*)

KING (*aside*). *Particularly* hectic! (*Aloud, cautiously.*) I er,—suppose you've come to see Mr. Tetlow on business?

TED. Naw! Do I look like a Tetrazini out of a job? Naw! I got a date here wit a skoit, see?

KING. What?—I beg your pardon?

TED. A lady, see? A fren' o' mine wot told me t' meet her here.

KING (*aside*). Good Lord! It can't be! (*Aloud.*) Oh, I understand! Well, er,—pardon the question, but on whose authority did you choose this house as a meeting place?

TED. D' lady's, see?

KING. Oh, er,—yes, yes!—Heavens above! Madelaine must be insane! (*To* TED.) Well, I suppose then that you are in some way related to,—er,—that is, have some connection with, and that you have some good reason for ——

TED (*advancing threateningly*). See here, cul, youse say wot youse mean, and say it quick, see?

KING (*bristling*). You bet I will! You're intruding in this house where you've no business to be, and you're going to clear out pretty quick; understand?

TED. Huh? I am, am I? Well, youse understand this pretty quick, young feller, dat I'm goin' t' stay right here till

d' lady I came t' see tells me t' go, or till I'm put out, see? An' if dere's a man here wot can put me out, which'll be goin' some, I'll stay in front of dis house till I see d' lady I came t' see; see?

KING. Very well; I'll call her, and take my word, she'll send you off in a hurry! You can wait in the library! (*He turns to go; aside.*) Heavens! Madelaine *must* get rid of this beast! [*Exit, back* L.

TED. She will, hey? Well, if she does, my dope's no good! Catch dat little queen ditchin' a guy! Not on yer life! Not little Leslie! (*He looks around.*) So I'm t' wait in d' library, hey? Dis joint, I suppose?

(*He crosses* R., *looks off stage, then strolls out front* R.; *as he goes,* BAR.'S *voice is heard off stage back* R.)

BAR. Hon the second floor; the missis'll show you. And mind; don't scratch the paint! (*A door slams and* BAR. *enters back* R. *He is somewhat rumpled.*) Ho, my eye! Wot a night! They do seem to be going hon wus than usual! (*He straightens his clothes.*) And ho my! 'Ere's more trouble! Honly think, Miss Case, next door, says as 'ow she saw through the kitchen window some one crawling hinto this very room, an' as 'ow she's certain hit was young Mr. Prentice! And the marster's orders as 'ow I'm to throw 'im right hout of the house! And 'ere 'e is hat large! 'Eavens! I'll 'ave to arsk the missis wot to do!

(*He goes out front* L., *shaking his head. For a moment the stage is vacant; the sound of fraternal festivities is still heard faintly in the distance.* PREN. *cautiously sticks his head out of the door back* L., *and peeps about.*)

PREN. Good! I've eluded Mister Barton and his ejective proclivities so far. I'm not exactly dying to impersonate Mr. Kelley, of Kalamazoo. I wonder if I'll have to do the brogue at dinner? (*He goes to window and looks out.*) Still at it! I wish them joy! Nevertheless, I don't like my suit-case being in their hands; some one might know that the old gent's my uncle, and they might come here and investigate. It makes me rather nervous. In fact, everything makes me nervous to-night!

Enter TED, *front* R., *and eyes him a moment.*

TED (*aside*). Huh! I suppose dis is d' guy wot's been sent t' bounce me out 'n here! (*Aloud.*) Hey, youse!

(PREN. *jumps back in terror, knocks over a chair, and takes refuge behind the table.*)

PREN. (*aside*). Lord! That butler at last! (*Aloud.*) Er,—well?

TED (*grinning*). Say, wot are youse scared of, huh?

PREN. (*in rich brogue*). Sure, an' nothing at all, your honor!

TED. Becuz unless youse is not who I think youse is, youse 'd better be, see? I thought maybe youse was a guy wot I was looking for; youse get me?

PREN. Sure, faith an' I do!

TED. Youse 'd better had, ye pea green Oirisher! (*Turns suddenly.*) Say, do youse belong in this joint?

PREN. Begorrah, an' I do not; but, sure, an' I'm a friend of Mr. King's, an' Kelley's me name, Kalamazoo being me home. Faith, me lad, an' perhaps I could sell ye a stove?

TED. Naw, youse can't! And don't "me lad" me, d'y see? Or I'll paste youse so hard in th' slats it'll make y'r hair fall out; youse get me?

PREN. (*with an attempt at jovial good nature*). Come, now, an' 'twas nothing I meant! Sure, faith an' you're such a broth of a boy ——

(TED *turns fiercely, and comes forward in a dangerously professional attitude;* PREN. *retreats till he falls backward on sofa;* TED *stands over him.*)

TED. See here, youse mut-faced gazebo! Don't youse try t' spring not'in' on me, see? It won't woik! Dat brogue o' yours sounds pretty fishy, and if youse is a bum ten-twent-thirt moving picter show actor rehoising a new act, and thinkin' y're going t' try it on th' dog, and try it on *me*, youse is going t' get hoit, see? And hoit bad, see? If youse thinks youse is going t' get funny wit' a big league ball player wot's been put out'n th' league f'r scrapping, y're mistaken, see? And till I hooks a new job I'm a bad man t' get funny wit'!

PREN. But—but —— Then you're not Barton?

TED (*turning away*). Barton? Barton who?

PREN. (*rising*). You're not Mr. Tetlow's butler?

TED (*turning suddenly*). Hey! Butler?

PREN. (*dodging behind the sofa*). Wait a minute! Don't shoot! It's all a mistake. I thought you were one of the family, and I apologize. Now, if you'll only tell me who you really are ——

TED. Why, sure, cul, if y're not trying t' trow me out; I'm Ted Strong, a week ago outfielder on th' St. Louis Nationals; but dat guy Breshnahan got too fly one day, and I pasted him one, see? So now I'm looking f'r a new job at th' college here. And a skoit wot I met on th' train was t' meet me here, but some guy got fresh, and said he'd have me trun out, and I thought youse was d' guy he sent t' do it, see?

PREN. I understand, perfectly. And, by Jove, *I* thought *you* were the butler, who has orders to throw *me* out!

TED. He has, huh? Well, say, cul; suppose youse and me go pals, and if Mister Fresh Guy 'r Mister Butler gets flip around here, we'll hand 'em a jolt in th' kisser, hey?

PREN. Good enough! We'll show them! (*They shake hands.*) I wish you had been with me when I met the gang outside!

TED. Was youse mixed up wit' dem, too?

PREN. Mixed up? I should say so! Why, man, I'm who they're after! You see, I've promised to join two different societies, so now I can't join either; and if a freshman refuses to join some fraternity, they all get together and kill him. Oh, I'd have a lovely time if they got hold of me!

TED. Well, they ain't going t' get youse wit' me here; they, nor nobody else. Just let 'em come; we'll keep 'em busy! (*The door-bell rings.*) Wot's dat?

PREN. Thunder, the door-bell! And Barton will have to pass through here to answer it! Quick! I'm supposed to be Mr. Kelley, of Kalamazoo, and if he ——

TED. And if he asks me who I am, I'll tell him, see?

Enter BAR. *back* L. PREN. *and* TED *assume defensive positions.*

BAR. (*pausing, and looking over their heads*). Beg pardon; Mr. Sumner, your room his ready, sir; hit's the one next to Mr. Kelley's, sir. (*He bows, and goes out back* R.)

TED. Mister Sumner, hey? Woops, m' dear, dat's a good one! And Mister Kelley! Say, I thought he wasn't wise t' youse?

PREN. There's something queer on; you notice he didn't look at either of us. He's got the names, but doesn't know

which is which. And now I wonder who this will be. Suppose it's my uncle !

Enter BAR., *back* R.

BAR. This way, sir.

Enter REV. ERNEST FREY, *with long overcoat, big traveling bag, and umbrella.*

FREY. Oh, thank you !

BAR. Hi'll call Mr. King, sir; Mr. Tetlow is hout of town at present, sir, but ——

FREY. Only fancy ! He said he would be here to-night ! (PREN. *jumps.*) And it is so expressly urgent that I —— Oh, dear me, I forgot; my card ! Oh, oh, oh ! (*He fumbles in his pocket.*) Ah, here it is ! (BAR. *goes out back* L.) How thoughtless of me !

(FREY *deposits his belongings, and comes forward to the table; he sits down, and takes out a note-book, in which he starts to write. The others watch him, and speak in low tones.*)

TED. Oh, Lizzie ! D'y pipe th' goloshes !

PREN. A minister to see my uncle ! I wonder what he wants ? Maybe the old gent's getting religion !

TED. Say, d'y think he'll speak to us ? And if he does, wot am I, a Swede or a Dago ?

PREN. Oh, the deuce; I don't know ! Hold on; we'll say you're French, and don't know any English. If he tries to talk to you, just answer "Oui, oui."

TED. Wee, wee, huh ? Say, is dat d' whole langwige ?

PREN. No, but you'll find it answers all your purposes.— See, he's stopped writing !

(FREY *puts away his note-book, and rises. As he turns toward the others, they look away; he starts slightly.*)

FREY (*aside*). Ah ! Two gentlemen ! I had not previously observed them ! I wonder —— (*He pauses; aloud.*) Oh, I beg your pardon, but perhaps one of you gentlemen could inform me concerning Mr. Tetlow's absence ?

PREN. Sure, an' it's not myself that could be informing ye, begging your Worship's pardon !

FREY (*aside*). Only fancy ! A son of Erin ! How de-

lightful! (*Aloud.*) Oh, dear me, how very unfortunate! Perhaps the other gentleman ——

PREN. Sure, an' it's not him that'll be telling ye, he being a Frenchman, that can't speak the tongue. (*To* TED.) Can ye, me lad?

TED. Wee, wee!

FREY. Oh, dear me, how unfortunate! You see, I am only in town for a few hours, and it is extremely urgent that I see the gentleman who resides here. Only fancy, too; he wrote me that he would surely be here to-night! (PREN. *starts nervously.*) Well, I suppose there is no use crying over spilt milk. You gentlemen are visiting here, I presume?

PREN. Faith, an' your Honor presumes rightly!

FREY. Ah, yes! (*Pauses; eyes* TED *covertly.*) And—er—you are here together, I presume?

PREN. Faith, an' we're here together; but it's only this night we've met!

FREY. Ah, so I fancied! (*Pauses; lowers his voice.*) And the—er—gentleman with you is a friend of Mr. Tetlow's, visiting him, I presume?

PREN. Faith, no, an' it was myself that got the idea that he was only waiting here to meet an acquaintance!

FREY. Oh, dear me! I am most expressly relieved! I sincerely trust that my esteemed friend Mr. Tetlow does not lower himself by associating intimately with such a fellow!

TED (*aside*). Huh!

PREN. (*apprehensively*). Oh, sure, now, your Worship, an' you're not after maning that?

FREY. Ah, yes; I feel that I must take exception in a marked degree to this type of person. Really, you know, his dress! Quite impossible! Only fancy! Red socks and a green cravat! Quite out of place in a gentleman's drawing-room! It stamps him, don't you know, as being of the rough and undesirable element which is unfortunately so conspicuous in our ——

(TED *has risen and stood, with his hands on his hips, and jaw outstretched, listening; at this point in the other's ramblings he steps in front of* PREN., *who tries to restrain him, and digs* FREY *in the ribs in order to attract his attention.*)

TED. Hey, youse! Wee, wee! Understand? *Wee, wee!* D'y get me, kid?

FREY (*springing back*). Oh, oh, oh! Merciful powers! Why! The creature speaks English! (*To* PREN.) Sir, you have most unkindly deceived me!

TED. Yep; dat's it! And now wot has youse t' say about it?

FREY. Oh, oh, oh! This is indeed quite too awful! Words utterly fail me!

TED. Well, it's a good ting, youse spindle-legged, fresh-water oyster! And say! Next time youse has any suggestions t' make concoining me rags, youse hand in all complaints t' th' box-office, see? Y' get me?

FREY. Oh, oh! Really, my dear sir, if I had known —— Oh, I am so perturbed! (*To* PREN.) Oh, sir, perhaps you have some influence over this gentleman,—if you could only explain and assure him that I meant absolutely no harm,—that my intentions ——

PREN. Oh, I'm sure I can fix it up all right! Now, my dear old fellow —— (*He pulls* TED *aside, and speaks in a quick whisper.*) Cut it out; don't waste your temper on this feeble-minded old fossil! I'll tell him what's up, and ask him to help us; you've got him so scared that he won't dare refuse! (*Aloud.*) And now I'm sure that you two gentlemen will find it expedient to drop the matter, and clasp each other's hands in firm friendship. Mr.—er ——

FREY (*delighted*). Oh, dear me; I forgot! I am the Rev. Ernest Frey, rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish.

PREN. Well, Mr. Frey, let me present Mr. Strong, late of St. Louis.

FREY. Ah, really! I am charmed! And er,—after all, you are one of us Americans?

TED. Naw! I ain't no American! I was in d' Nationals till I got canned, but I ain't in no league now. Y' see, dat guy Breshnahan ——

PREN. Yes, yes; we understand; but let me explain things to Mr. Frey. (*In a confidential and deprecatory manner.*) You see, my friend and I are in a rather peculiar situation; for er,—one reason or another, we are both under the absolute necessity of remaining for the present in this house, but most unfortunately certain of the inmates are attempting to forcibly get rid of us. Now, in order to conceal our identity from any one who might let be known our whereabouts, we are trying to remain incognito. Understand? And so though you have,—very cleverly, I must confess,—discovered that we are not who

we represent ourselves to be, still if we can rely on you to conceal this fact, it would greatly aid us, and ——

(*His wind gives out, and he draws a long breath; before he can continue, he is interrupted.*)

FREY (*horrified*). Oh, but my most dear sir! Really, you know ——! I—I could not think of it! Why, that would be wilful deception! Only fancy! A minister of the gospel aiding in an attempt to deceive the people in the house of one of his trusted friends, in behalf of two self-confessed intruders! It would be most unpardonable; really, I almost feel it my duty to at once inform some one of ——

TED (*once more digging him in the ribs*). Say! Are youse going t' do wot we'se told youse t' do, or are youse not?

FREY (*with dignity*). Oh, oh! My dear sir, I would wish you to remember that you are addressing the rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish, and that to one in my position ——

TED. Aw, cut it! I don't care if youse is th' whole National Commission; see? Youse is going t' do wot we says, or youse gets poked in th' mug, d'y get me? Like dat; see?

(*He draws back his arm, and brings it forward as though for a swishing upper cut.* FREY *jumps away, trembling.*)

FREY. Oh, oh, oh! This is coercion! I shall certainly appeal to the police authorities for assistance; really ——

PREN. (*kicking* TED *on the shin and motioning him away*). Oh, no; you *must* help us! Why, you'll be *doing* the right thing in helping us, because, don't you see, we're the ones that are in the right, and the others are wrongfully trying to throw us out into the street! Your duty as a good citizen and a minister lies in protecting two innocent men from the unjust persecutions of their enemies! There! You see you are under the moral obligation to help us!

FREY. Oh, my! I am so greatly perturbed, really I cannot be quite certain of my proper course of action! However (*glancing nervously at* TED), if you say that you are being oppressed without cause, I suppose that in my position as a shepherd among my fellow men, it is my duty to take you under my protecting wing.

TED. Dat's right, cul; be a sport! (*Whacks* FREY *on the back.*) We'll stick around under y'r flapper just as long as

youse want. Say, but we'll own th' whole house before we gets tru, hey, Bo? (*Whacks* PREN. *on the back.*)

PREN. Good enough; but don't you think that we'd better go somewhere else? The butler has to go through here to answer the door-bell, and it might become awkward if he should run across us *too* often.

FREY. Oh, but you know he has taken my card up, and really, I must await some response from the present master of the house!

PREN. Oh, come along; that's not necessary! You say that your business is with Mr. Tetlow; and since he is not here, it's no use seeing any one else. Suppose you tell us what your business is, and perhaps we could help you out.

TED. Dat's wot; youse put us wise, and we'll help youse deliver th' goods, see? Come, gents; th' court will now adjoin t' th' library!

(*He links arms with the other two, and they go out front* R. *As they disappear,* MAD. *enters back* L., *followed by* BAR. *She sees them go. She is in evening dress, and appears radiant and greatly excited.*)

MAD. Oh, there they are! Barton, you may go downstairs.

BAR. Beg pardon, miss, but Hi was to tell the Rev. Mr. Frey that ——

MAD. (*impatiently*). Yes, yes! I know; but you need not bother. I'll tell him myself! (BAR. *hesitates, then goes out front* L., *shaking his head.*) And now! Oh, dear; what shall I say to him first? Goodness, I'm so flustered! Why did Rufe take such a violent dislike to him? I'm sure they must have quarreled! And I wonder how he found out where I lived? I'll bet that he *followed* me here! The darling! (*She starts toward the door; pauses.*) Goodness! That horrid minister is with him! Oh, I do wish that he would —— (*She looks out of the door front* R.) Oh, he is, he is! He's coming this way now! Oh ——

(*She stops, looks around, then runs up stage, and stands by the window.* PREN. *enters, and starts up stage,* L.)

PREN. I'd better nail those hats and coats, or —— (*He sees* MAD.; *pauses.*) Oh, I —— (*Recognizes her.*) What! You here?

(*He goes toward her; they meet in the centre of the stage.*)

MAD. Yes; didn't you know?

PREN. The dickens, no!

MAD. (*petulantly*). Then why did you come?

PREN. Why, er,—you see —— Oh, what difference does it make? I say, it's great, your being here! I thought I'd never see you again; it's been ages since we parted!

MAD. It hasn't at all; it's been just an hour!

PREN. Oh, well, I mean it's seemed ages! Hasn't it seemed so to you?

MAD. Well,—per-haps.—But can't we sit down? I've something *very* important to tell you!

PREN. Why, yes, let's —— (*He remembers something.*) Oh, thunder! I'm afraid I can't; I forgot that I've a couple of friends waiting for me in the next room, and I must go back. You see, I'm afraid to leave them alone together very long, for fear that they'd get into an argument. You understand, don't you?

MAD. Ye-es; I suppose so. And tell the Rev. Mr. Frey, —he's one of them, isn't he?—that Mrs. King will be down in just a few minutes to welcome him.

PREN. All right. Confound him, anyway! But I'll see you again, won't I? You're not going right away?

MAD. No, indeed!

PREN. Then good-bye. (*He takes her hand in both of his.*) You know how I hate to run off this way. But you see it can't be helped. So good-bye till the next time!

(*He drops her hand and goes out front* R.)

MAD. Well,—I think he *might* have kissed me! But he's a perfect dear! I don't see why Rufe took such a violent dislike to him so quickly! And the awful things he called him! A "mucker"! Imagine! Oh, you wait, Mr. Rufus! I'll get even with *you!*—And goodness! I just know that Uncle Hen will simply hate him, on general principles, and make a horrible scene, and never give his consent! Oh, I'm sure I'm going to have the most gorgeous kind of a romance!—Heavens, here comes Rufe! Now for a perfectly lovely row!

(*She goes over and leans against the mantelpiece, facing the stage expectantly.* KING *enters back* L., *and comes over toward her.*)

KING. Well, I see you've gotten rid of him. I should hope so! Whew! A regular Bowery tough! (*Sternly.*) Madelaine, I'm surprised at you! And right here and now I want to warn you against your habit of making casual acquaintances; it's got to stop, and next time I hear of you ——

MAD. (*sweetly*). Rufie, dear, don't you think you're beginning rather early to lecture me—the very first night I'm here? And besides, you know, the gentleman on whom you are conferring such *lovely* titles hasn't left at all!

KING. What!

MAD. What what?

KING. What wh ——! Oh, the devil! You don't mean that you didn't send the fellow away?

MAD. Most certainly not! I don't treat my friends that way!

KING (*seething*). Madelaine, do you mean what you say?

MAD. What thing that I say?

KING. Oh! *Is* that fellow still here in this house?

MAD. Why! Of course he is!

KING. Then I command you to send him about his business this instant!

MAD. How perfectly delicious! *You* command *me* to ——

KING. Yes, I do! And if you don't obey me, do you know what I'll do?

MAD. Really, Rufie dear, I can't for the life of me guess! There are so *many* things you might do; you know, you're *so* ingenious;—you might ask him to dinner!

(KING *turns away with a wild gesture of impotent rage, and rushes up stage. At the door he turns back and pauses a moment.*)

KING. All right! You'll be mighty sorry in a minute or two! Entertain your choice friend while you've got the chance; in ten minutes I'll be back here with a policeman, and he'll spend the night in the Raeton jail!

(*He flings himself out of the door;* MAD. *sends a peal of laughter after him, then comes forward and sits on the end of the sofa.*)

MAD. (*relaxed and slightly hysterical*). Oh, dear, dear me! Oh, oh! But wasn't it a perfect circus? Heavens! Suppose *he* had come in; I'm sure there'd have been a regular

scene! (*Pauses.*) Goodness! I hope Rufe *does* have him sent to jail! It would be the best thing in the world, because I know it would put him right in the good graces of Uncle Hen; the thought that Rufe had acted without his orders would set him simply wild! Then there *would* be trouble! Oh, isn't it splendid! (MARY *enters back* L.; MAD. *goes to meet her; they come forward.*) Dearest, your perfect love of a husband is in a most splendiferous temper, and has gone to invoke the Raeton authorities, and cause my affinity to be placed behind the cruel, cruel bars!

MARY. Oh, Madelaine, why did you make him angry? You know he has got such a fearful temper, and when he's roused he's *so* unreasonable!

MAD. Darling, I didn't have to do any making; I just stood still, and he made himself! But don't worry; it will all come out right in the end, and we'll all live happily ever after!

MARY. I sincerely hope so! Just now I must go and welcome the Rev. Mr. Frey.

MAD. Gracious! I wonder what a minister wants with Uncle Hen. That is, I wonder what Uncle Hen wants with a minister.

MARY. My dear, he has had a perfect stream of the queerest people you ever saw coming to the house all the time, ever since he became a professional impressario.

MAD. That means he's a kind of employment agency, doesn't it?

MARY. Yes, for singers, you know; and along with the real thing he gets all kinds of cranks and lunatics. So I'm always ready for anything.—But come; you can help me greet the gentleman from Heathfield Parish. (*The door-bell rings.*) There! Another unexpected guest!—Goodness, suppose it should be the policeman! (BAR. *crosses the stage, and goes out back* R.) How awkward, with our clerical friend on the scene! I think that I'd better wait and receive whoever it is.

MAD. I don't believe it can be Rufe, so soon; I'll bet the Raeton police force is having its hands full to-night, and will be hard to locate.

BAR. (*off stage*). This way, miss.

Enter LESLIE HILL, *back* R., *followed by* BAR. *She comes in with what might be described as a swish, looks quickly around the room, then advances toward* MARY, *accompanied by considerable parasol action.*

LES. Oh, how *do* you do? This is Mrs. Tetlow, isn't it?

(*Shakes hands effusively with* MARY.)

MARY. No, I am Mr. Tetlow's niece, Mrs. King.

LES. (*still holding her hand*). Oh, *indeed? Charmed*, I'm sure! I am Miss Hill, and I have an appointment with Mr. Tetlow for this evening!

MARY. But Mr. Tetlow is out of town! He has been absent for the past week, and we have no idea when he will return.

LES. Oh, *indeed?* Why, he wrote me only the other day that he would see me this evening, on a *very* important matter of business!

MARY. Gracious! Then he *will* be here this evening! It's fortunate that I had planned to wait dinner till the late train! Miss Hill, you will dine with us, will you not?

LES. Oh, *charmed*, I'm sure!

MARY. Then you can talk to my uncle afterward. And now —— Oh, let me present Miss Sanderson, Mr. Tetlow's ward!

LES. (*clinging affectionately to* MAD.'S *hand*). *Indeed! Charmed*, I'm sure!

MARY. Now I must ask you to excuse me for a moment while I tell Barton that we expect Mr. Tetlow. Miss Hill, won't you remove your wraps? Madelaine will help you; won't you, dear? (LES. *removes her coat and veil, but not her hat;* MARY *crosses* L., *and pauses; aside.*) Oh, dear! These people must all be famished, and dinner not for over an hour yet! I'll have to give them tea; goodness, tea at a quarter past seven! (*She goes out front* R.)

LES. Oh, my *dear!* Thank you *so* much! You know, one gets so terribly upset traveling!

(*She flaunts across the room, pausing in front of the mirror front* L., *where she arranges her hair, and produces and uses a small vanity box.*)

MAD. Yes; I have just come from St. Louis myself. (*Aside.*) Oh, dear! I don't feel like talking to this creature! She looks like a common actress!

LES. (*still busy*). Oh, *indeed?* My dear, I know what an awful trip that must be! I've only come from New York myself, where I've just closed an engagement.

MAD. Oh, you're a singer, I suppose?

LES. Oh, yes *indeed!* And I've come to see Mr. Tetlow about helping me on a new thing that I'm going into. It's a *fine* chance; I'm sure I'll make the *hit* of the season!

MAD. (*not overenthusiastically*). How interesting! I suppose you are entering the field of grand opera?

LES. Oh, no *indeed!* It's a musical sketch for the Battis and Reis circuit, and carries fourteen people!

MAD. (*aside*). I thought so! Oh, dear me! I believe I'll desert the fort! I don't believe, after all, that I want to watch my precious hero carted off to jail! (*Aloud.*) How interesting! I hope it will be a success!

LES. Oh, thanks! I'm sure it will be! (*She finishes her operations, and the vanity box vanishes.*) You know, I *was* playing at the Folies Bergeres, but one of the *big* composers simply *begged* me to take this act, to introduce some new songs, and *of course* I couldn't refuse! And my *dear!* He's letting me choose my *own* company; so I've come to Mr. Tetlow to get his advice.

MAD. How interesting! I'm sure he can help you.—But I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me; I'm so tired from my trip that I simply must rest before I dress for dinner. Mrs. King will be back in a few minutes.

LES. (*clasping her hand impetuously*). Oh, my *dear!* I'm sure I won't mind! *Do* go and lie down; it's always *so* refreshing to have a nap before dinner! I'll tell Mrs. King, if you wish. *Good*-bye! (MAD. *goes out back* L.) The cat! I know she'd like to claw my eyes out! As though she wasn't already dressed for the evening! Just watch; she'll put on all kinds of lugs for my benefit!—*Well!* If I only had the new gown I'm going to wear in my act, wouldn't I make her hump some to beat me? Well, I *guess!* And now if only my cute baseball player will turn up, things will simply *hum!*—And I'm to stay to *dinner!* Well, I think I'll look around a bit. (*Goes over to door front* R., *and opens it.*) I wonder —— Oh, this must be the library! (*She looks in, and starts back.*) There are three men in there! Oh! (*Looks again.*) Goodness! There he *is!* *Would* you believe it! Just think! He must have come *straight* from the station! The dear! My, I wonder if I can attract his attention! (*She takes out her handkerchief, and waves it furtively in the door.*) There! He saw it! Here he comes! (*She crosses* L.) Oh, dear, I wonder if he'll try to kiss me!

TED (*bursting in, then advancing somewhat abashed*). Say! It's little Leslie at last! Gee, kid, I'm glad t' see youse!

(*He shakes her hand at arm's length.*)

LES. Oh, *indeed!* I'm *so* glad you are pleased, Mr. Strong!

TED. Say, kid, nix on that! Call me anyting youse want, but nix on dat Mister business, see? I thought youse said we was t' be pals?

LES. Oh, very *well;* if you *want* to!

TED. Want to? Say, wot did I tell youse on th' train, hey? Wot did I come up t' this joint f'r? I thought youse said youse was looking f'r a steady pal, and dat I'd about fill th' bill? And now youse hand me th' icy stare!

LES. Well, I *did* say something like that, because I *thought* you *wanted* to, but after the *frigid* reception I got, why ——

TED. Say! Wot was wrong? Didn't I look tickled t' death? Was there anyting wrong wit' d' way I mitted youse?

LES. No, not *that;* but I *thought* that *perhaps* you *might* have —— (*Pauses.*)

TED. Oh! (*Catches her in his arms, and kisses her.*) Say, is dat wot youse meant?

LES. That's *better!* And now tell me *who* those men are in there!

TED. Say, kiddo, dere's d' greatest bunch here youse ever laid eyes on! Dere's a minister an' a rah-rah boy dat's hiding from d' guys outside, an' a fresh mut wot's trying t' throw me out'n here. So d' colleger and m'self has gone pals t' keep from getting bounced, and we've got d' minister guy penned up dere where he won't do no gassing. See?

LES. Oh, *indeed!* But the lady that lives here is coming back in *just* a minute, so if you don't want to be seen, you'd better beat it!

TED. Say! Tanks f'r d' tip, kid! And say, if d' lady gets wise t' us, tell her dat my name's Sumner, see? And dat d' other guy, not d' minister, is named Kelley, see? Will youse help us?

LES. Sure; you *bet* I will!

TED. Dat's good. We had t' ding d' minister guy on d' bean t' make him come around.—Gee! Here she comes; I'm off, Leslie, old kiddo!

(*He slips out front* R., *as* MARY *enters front* L., *followed by*

BAR., *with tray, which he sets on table while he gets the tea table and arranges it.*)

MARY. Oh, Miss Hill, I fear you will think it most inopportune, but I know you must be terribly hungry after your trip, and as dinner is not for another hour, I thought you might like some tea.

LES. Oh, *charmed*, I'm *sure!* And, Mrs. King, Miss Sanderson begged to be excused, as she had to go and dress.

MARY. How strange! I thought she had just come down from dressing for dinner! (LES. *smiles, and nods knowingly.*) And I wanted her to help entertain the Rev. Mr. Frey! Miss Hill, perhaps you would not mind if I asked a gentleman, who is also here to see Mr. Tetlow, to join us?

LES. Oh, *charmed*, I'm *sure!*

MARY. He's in the next room, I believe. Barton, will you announce tea in the library?

(BAR. *bows, and crosses* R.)

LES. Oh, *indeed!* Then he must be the strange gentleman I saw!

MARY. Strange gentleman?

LES. Oh, yes, *indeed!* You see, I saw two friends of mine in there talking and a strange gentleman with them! (MARY *looks greatly surprised.*) I suppose they'll come in, too; I'll introduce them to you, if you'll let me. They're both *perfectly charming!*

MARY (*bewildered*). Oh, I should be delighted, only ——

Enter BAR. *front* R.; *stands by the door, while* TED *and* FREY *enter together, arm in arm, followed by* PREN.

LES. Mrs. King, *do* let me present my *old* and *dear* friends, Mr. Sumner ——

(MARY *starts, then observes the frantic signs of her brother.*)

TED (*shaking hands with* MARY). I'm glad t' meet youse, ma'am.

(BAR. *goes out front* L.)

LES. —— And Mr. Kelley.

(PREN. *steps forward and seizes* MARY'S *hand in both of his, contorting his face meaningly.*)

PREN. Very much pleased, indeed; very much pleased! (*Aside.*) For heaven's sake, don't recognize me! (*Aloud.*) And let me present my most esteemed friend, the right Rev. Ernest Frey, rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish!

FREY. Oh, I assure you, I am very greatly pleased to meet the daughter of my old friend, Henry Tetlow, Mrs. King; and no less so to form the acquaintance of Miss,—er ——

LES. (*shaking hands effusively, then clinging to his arm*). Oh, *charmed*, I'm *sure!* I'm Miss Leslie Hill, you know. Pat didn't mention my name. He's so forgetful; aren't you, Pat?

(*Over her shoulder, to* PREN.)

PREN. (*blankly*). Pat? (*Light dawns.*) Oh, er,—yes, yes! Dreadful habit, you know!—But let's have some tea; it's ready, isn't it, Mary,—h'm,—er, Mrs. King?

(*He laughs confusedly.*)

MARY. Quite ready, Pat —— Oh, I mean *Mr.* Kelley!—Miss Hill, won't you please pour? I must go and tell Barton that Mr. Sumner will be with us for dinner.

LES. Oh, *charmed*, I'm *sure!* *So* kind of you to ask him to stay, my dear!

(*She sits down on the sofa before the tea table, drawing* FREY *down beside her;* TED *leans against the mantelpiece, and eyes the pouring process sceptically.*)

MARY (*aside to* PREN.; *wrathfully*). What on earth does this mean?

PREN. Oh, Lord, don't make me explain *now;* it would take a week! Just don't be surprised at anything, and pour oil like the dickens whenever the water gets choppy!

MARY. But ——

PREN. Oh, you don't do any butting; I'm the goat here! Just back me up, and hurry! That crowd's not safe left alone!

MARY. Very well, I'll be with you shortly,—Pat!

(*She goes out front* L., *laughing at* PREN., *who makes a gesture of despair, and joins the rest.*)

LES. Oh, *indeed?* Isn't that perfectly *dear!* You know, I always have just *loved* Episcopalian ministers; I think they look simply *cute* in their little white nighties! (FREY *almost drops his cup;* PREN. *claws the air, and goes and sits on table* L.; LES. *continues breezily.*) Oh, and do you know, I haven't even *asked* Mr. Sumner what his denomination is, though we're *engaged!* What are you, dear?

TED. I told youse I ain't not'in' now! When I was in St. Louis, I was a utility outfielder, but dat guy Breshnahan ——

FREY (*wildly*). Oh, really, you know,—I—I—er—let me take a cup of tea to Mr.—Mr.—— (*He rises nervously, and crosses to* PREN., *very much agitated; aside.*) My dear sir, really, you know, I cannot submit to such sacrilege; it is most unendurable and unpardonable! And I cannot understand this strange duplicity of names; really, my dear sir, if you cannot explain your position clearly to me, I shall feel called upon to ——

PREN. Hang it, man, I *can't* explain! You'll have to take my word that it's all right. And try not to mind these—er—friends of mine; they're rough diamonds, I assure you; most estimable people at heart!

FREY. Really, I am so greatly perturbed, I do not know what to do! But I suppose I must endure until the arrival of my friend Mr. Tetlow!

(*He turns reluctantly toward the tea table.*)

LES. (*to* TED). Oh, *indeed?* You were really there that night in Milwaukee? How perfectly *dear!* You know, I never sang so well in *all* my *life!*

FREY. Only fancy! Did I understand you to say that you sang?

LES. Oh, yes, *indeed!* That's my business, you know!

FREY (*greatly delighted*). Only fancy! You know, my reason for consulting Mr. Tetlow is through the necessity of filling the vacancies in our choir at St. Benedict's, in Heathfield Parish! So perhaps, if my friend does not arrive, you might recommend some singers to me!

LES. Oh, yes, *indeed!* I have lots of friends who are per-

fectly *splendid!* Regular artists, you know, every one!—You see, at the Folies Bergeres I was the most popular girl in the *whole* chorus, and had simply *packs* of friends!

FREY (*apprehensively*). But ——!

LES. (*enthusiastically*). Oh, I'm sure I could get you *all* the girls you *want!* Now there's Maybelle Thomas; my dear, such a stunning blonde you never *saw;*—and every hair of it her *very* own,—and she never even has to so much as *touch* a curling iron to it!

FREY. Oh, but you know ——

LES. It's perfectly wonderful, *positively!*—And Valerie St. Clair; oh, you'd simply love her to *death! Such* a complexion, and such *glorious* eyes;—just like a *cow's*—perfectly *dear!*—And the *cutest* nose, and her lips! My dear, you simply couldn't *keep* yourself from kissing her!

FREY (*greatly perturbed*). Oh, oh, oh! Really, my dear young lady, I ——!

LES. Oh, no, you simply couldn't!—And then my very *dearest* friend, Viola Vanderheim;—one of the very *oldest* Dutch families, quite obsolete, really,—but oh, my dear, her *figure! Positively* the most gorgeous thing you ever saw; she might be Venus Milo her very self! And her carriage, and her manner, and her walk!—You should simply *see* her walk across the stage in the second act, in a pale blue satin evening gown. Oh, my *dear!*

(*Carried away, she springs up, seizes her parasol, and strides majestically across the stage, head held high, and with considerable arm motion.* TED *watches enthusiastically,* PREN. *tears his hair and retreats up stage, while* FREY *trembles with perturbation.*)

TED. Gee, great work, kid!

FREY. Oh, oh, oh!—Really, I —— Oh, oh!

(*As the scene reaches its climax,* MARY *enters front* L., *and stands amazed; at the same moment, a red glare shines through the window, and grows brighter and brighter; while the noise of the celebrators, which has been increasing noticeably, suddenly swells in volume, as though the crowd had turned a corner into the street below. There appears to be some special cause for excitement, and the noise in a moment centres directly outside of the house.*)

MARY. Why, have you finished tea already?

FREY. Really, my dear madame, I must bid you good-bye, and leave this house! I—I cannot longer endure the indignities which this—this ——

(*He eyes* LES., *and hesitates; she watches him in surprised incomprehension.*)

MARY. Why, what do you mean; you are going?

FREY. Really, I fear so, my dear madame; as rector of St. Benedict's and a minister of the gospel, I cannot remain longer in this house. Kindly inform Mr. Tetlow that I will communicate with him at the first opportunity.

LES. Then you won't even *consider* my suggestions?

(*Receiving no answer, she flaunts her head, and joins* TED *by the sofa.*)

MARY. But I don't understand at all why you are leaving; and really, you must not go out just this minute; the boys from the college seem to have made a rendezvous here, and if you get among them, it is very possible that you might be caused great annoyance.

(*The bell rings;* BAR. *crosses* R.)

PREN. Yes, yes! You really must not go out; you must stay to dinner, at least! Perhaps you would like to have a little talk with my sister about her art work; you know, she studied several years at the Art Students' League, in New York!

LES. Oh, *indeed!* You know, I posed for them there once,—as a water nymph! And I *almost* had pneumonia afterward!

FREY. Oh, oh, oh! Really, I ——!

(*Distracted, he tries confusedly to reach the door;* KING'S *voice is heard in the hall; he enters, followed by a policeman,* JIM.)

KING. Come along, officer; here we are! There; arrest that man!

(*He points at* TED; JIM *approaches him.*)

JIM. You're my prisoner! Come along, now; lively!

(LES. *screams, and throws her arms around* TED'S *neck.*)

LES. Oh, don't you *dare!* That's the man you want!

(*She points at* PREN.; JIM *goes toward him, but* MARY *throws her arm around her brother's neck and pushes him away.*)

MARY. Don't you dare touch my brother! You shan't arrest him!

JIM. By Godfrey! (*Sees* FREY, *who in the confusion has retreated to extreme front* L.) Ah-ha! You're the man I'm after, then, I guess! Come along with you!

(*He seizes him by the collar and drags him to the middle of stage.*)

FREY. Oh, I protest! I protest! This is some horrible mistake! I am the Rev. Ernest Frey, rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish, and ——

KING. The devil, officer, that's not the man! But —— (*He turns inquiringly toward* LES. *and* TED, *who are still in a clinch.*) Is *that* the lady you came here to meet?

TED. Sure it is! Wot guy said it wasn't?

KING. Then I humbly apologize; I have made a big mistake. (*Turns.*) And I must apologize to you, officer, for bringing you here under false pretences ——

JIM. False pretences, is it, hey? Well, in that case you'll do your apologizing to the judge; and there'll be a good-sized fine in that apology, too! Come along, now!

(*He seizes* KING *by the arm.*)

KING. Good Lord! But see here; let me explain! I thought ——

(*He is dragged out.*)

ALL. Ho, ho, ho! Oh, *Rufe!* Wot t'ell! My *dear!* Oh, oh, oh!

MARY. Oh, what *can* be wrong?

(*She starts to go up stage;* PREN. *follows her, but suddenly grabs and drags her back.*)

PREN. (*intensely excited*). My God! They're climbing up to the window! Quick! Or they'll see me!

(*He dashes to the table, and turns out the light. The room is again in darkness, except for the fire, and the glare at the window. The figures of* PREN. *and* MARY *move about confusedly a moment, then go out back* L. BAR. *goes out front* L.; TED *and* LES. *hurry into the library, leaving* FREY *alone. He runs distractedly about the room, knocking things over, and finally hides behind the sofa in front of the fire. As* PREN. *turns out the light, the front door is heard to slam, and a howl goes up from the crowd, in which individual cries can be distinguished: "You've got 'im, Jim!" "'Ray for Jim!" "We'll help you, Jim!" "Don't try to escape!" "Let's lynch 'im!" "On to the jail!" A voice starts to sing "John Brown's Body"; the rest gradually take it up. As all begin to sing, and the procession starts, the curtain falls swiftly.*)

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same. The room is in darkness, as at the end of Act I; only a faint glare shows at the window. In the distance is heard muffled cheering, and the faint strains of "John Brown's Body."*

(FREY *is huddled up beside the sofa front* R.; *after a few moments he peeps cautiously over the sofa, and looks about the room. Then he rises gradually, and tiptoes toward the window. He stumbles against an overturned chair, and dashes back to the sofa; then advances again. He stands a moment by the window, looking out, then feels his way forward, and leans against the table.*)

FREY. Oh, oh, oh! Upon my word, this is too terrible! I must escape! Really —— (*Pauses.*) I wonder if I might venture to turn up the light once more! (*He fumbles timidly with the light, which suddenly flashes on. He jumps.*) Oh! Ah, that is better! (*He looks about him.*) They are all departed; such a relief! Really, I do not believe that I could endure another encounter with that terrible person! Only fancy! An actress! And I, the rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish! (*Words fail him.*) Oh, dear! I must at once escape this den of iniquity, which I had hoped to find a harbor from the frightful condition of the city without! Dear, dear! And I cannot make my escape through the streets on foot; I must summon a vehicle to convey me to an hotel. Only fancy! And I had anticipated so pleasant an evening in the company of my old friend! (*He goes back* R., *and leans over telephone directory on desk.*) Let me see —— (*He rambles on under his breath, thumbing the leaves.*) I believe that the livery stable is managed by a person named Olcott. Only fancy! One would associate that name rather with singers than horses!

(BAR. *has entered front* L.; *he observes* FREY'S *back, and after a moment's inspection, nods his head knowingly.*)

BAR. Ah! Hat last! Ther' 'e is, and now Hi must throw

'im hout! Oh, Lord! Hi 'opes the beggar doesn't show fight! Hi'll grab 'im from be'ind, that's wot Hi'll do! (*He tiptoes up behind* FREY, *quickly pinions his arms from behind, and rushes him front* R., *and across stage.*) Ho, there! Now Hi've got you! Don't resist; hout you goes!

FREY (*clinging desperately to the table in passing*). Oh, oh, oh! But I protest! This is an outrage! I beg you to hear me!

BAR. (*puffing*). Don't argufy! This 'll teach you 'ow not to climb hinto windows! Hout with you!

(*Forces him nearly to the door.*)

FREY. But this is assault! I shall summon the police! Oh, oh! Release me at once!

(*He struggles, and breaks loose;* BAR. *follows, and seizes him again from behind, just at the doorway;* KING *enters through it suddenly. He is considerably rumpled.*)

KING. Here! What the devil does this mean? Barton! Leave this gentleman alone!

BAR. Hi can't, sir! Hi've got to throw 'im hout! Hit's master's orders that if Mister Prentice tries to henter the 'ouse ——

KING. But, you idiot! This isn't Mr. Prentice!

BAR. (*releasing* FREY). Wot!

FREY (*trying to regain a somewhat unsettled dignity*). Certainly not! I am the Rev. Ernest Frey, rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish, and I protest ——

KING. Of course! I don't blame you in the least! Barton, go down-stairs, and wait till I send for you. Quick, now!

BAR. Yes, sir! (*Withdraws in disorder.*)

KING (*taking* FREY'S *arm, and coming forward*). And now, my dear sir, let me explain and apologize. There has evidently been a most disastrous mistake, and ——

FREY. Quite correct, sir; and, I might add, quite unpardonable! I shall inform the police at once, and institute suit against the inmates of this house for assault and battery!

KING. But, my dear Mr. Frey, you must not do that! Mr. Tetlow would never forget it, and I am sure that he will make all right again as soon as he is acquainted with the situation. You shall have full restitution!

FREY. Really, though, I feel almost inclined to place upon

him the whole blame, as his presence here would have prevented everything; whereas, after promising to meet me to-night, he has neglected to do so, and left me to face these terrible experiences alone!

KING. He promised to be here to-night? But we received no word of his intention! Still, my dear Mr. Frey, I am sure that if you will try to forget what has happened, and will remain with us until my uncle arrives ——

FREY. Ah! Your uncle, did you say?

KING. Yes; I am Mr. King, and as my uncle's representative in his absence, I am sure I can promise you protection.

FREY. Oh, I am so relieved! For if you represent Mr. Tetlow, perhaps I can execute my business with you. You see, I *must* leave for Boston to-morrow on a very early train, so if ——

KING. Yes, yes; I see! But—er—about the nature of this business?

FREY. I wish to procure two singers, a man and a woman, to fill the vacancies in our choir at St. Benedict's, and I depend upon the advice of Mr. Tetlow in my selection.

KING. Oh, I see!—But I don't believe that I could help you, unless —— (*He pauses, then appears hit with an idea.*) Oh, I say! Perhaps if I could get you a couple of singers here, you would be able to decide whether they would do?

FREY. Oh, really,—I —— (*Pauses, hesitatingly.*)

KING. Of course, that would be impossible, if you do not feel competent to judge ——

FREY (*with dignity*). My dear sir, as rector of St. Benedict's, I am quite confident that I possess the ability to select proper members for its choir!

KING. All well and good then! I'll see what I can do. (*He rings bell.*) You had better go up to my room, and rest yourself before passing judgment. (BAR. *appears.*) Barton, show the Rev. Mr. Frey up to my room. (BAR. *bows, and goes out back* L., FREY *following.* KING *throws himself on the sofa.*) Whew! Worse and more of it! Now, *where* the devil am I going to produce two singers from! I mustn't let one of Uncle Hen's best customers go off unsatisfied; I *must* find something! And what the deuce can *I* do; I don't know beans about the blame business! It's lucky, I don't believe his Reverence knows much more! But why isn't my uncle here! Lord, what a mess!

(*He jumps up, and walks up and down the room.* PREN. *enters back* L., *sees him, and comes forward jubilantly.*)

PREN. Ho, ho! My precious jailbird! How goes the life behind the bars? Ha, ha, ha!

KING. Oh, shut up! I'm in the deuce of a mess, and I'll thank you to mind you own business!

PREN. Oh, you will, hey? Well, how about a little while ago, when you thought it such a joke my being in trouble? Come, tell us what's up! How did you get back so soon? Some one stand your bail?

KING. No. The fickle populace decided it would be more fun to rescue me, and lynch the officer in my place. So here I am.

PREN. Hairbreadth Harry, eh? Well, I'm mighty glad you got off; but if you could have seen the expression on your face when the cop was hauling you out,—ho, ho, ho!

KING. Oh, shut up! You're no one to laugh! Do you know that the Rev. Ernest says that your uncle promised to meet him here to-night?

PREN. Oh, damn! So he told me, too! I'd forgotten. But hang it! I've *got* to stay here! Don't you see, man?

KING. No. I *don't* see! You know what will happen if he finds you here.

Enter BAR., *back* L.

BAR. (*dubiously*). Beg pardon, sir; ha telegram for you, sir!

KING. Give it to me. (*Takes it.*) And Barton, in future be careful who you try to throw out, understand? You have grossly insulted one of Mr. Tetlow's most valuable customers and friends. Of course, if you catch young Prentice around, treat him as roughly as you please, but make sure you've got the right man. You may go.

BAR. Yes, sir! (*Goes out front* L.)

PREN. Thanks, old fellow; you're always so thoughtful! Now let's see what's in the telegram.

KING. Oh, yes, I forgot! (*He opens and reads the telegram. A relieved smile spreads over his face.*) Well, at last! One bright ray of sunshine in all this gloom! Listen! "Will be home to-morrow on 8: 15; arrange to meet Rev. Ernest Frey on 6: 30 from New York." Signed, H. Tetlow! Well, thank heaven! That's off my mind! The Rev. Ernest

must have mixed his dates. Now you can associate with the rest of us without fear of any dramatic entrance on the part of your uncle.

PREN. Well, that *is* great! Now let's get our happy little family together, and the Rev. Ernest will give us his blessing!

KING. No, he won't! Not unless I can get my hands on a couple of singers for his blessed choir to-night. You see he's got to go on to Boston to-morrow morning, Uncle Hen or no Uncle Hen.

PREN. And you've got to get him a couple of songsters before he'll be quite happy and serene?

KING. That's it!

PREN. All right. We'll fix him out in fine shape! We haven't any genuine Pattis on hand, but I'll tell you what we'll do. Great idea! My friend Strong, alias Sumner, and myself will stand in front of that fine red screen over there, and behind that screen you can operate my uncle's fine new Victrola! Oh, very clever!

KING. Don't be an ass! Try and think of something.

PREN. (*enthusiastically*). I have! You turn on the Caruso stuff, we'll go through the motions, and the old duffer won't know the difference! You can fix him up with a pair of blue glasses!

KING. Nonsense! It would never work in the world!

PREN. Oh, be a sport! There's a chance that we might slip one over on the old stiff, and it would be a lark, anyway! And what else is there to do? You can't materialize real singers out of thin air on the spur of the moment!

KING (*wavering*). We-ll, he did just the same as say that he didn't know anything about music; and if we could manage to get hold of his spectacles ——

PREN. Great work! We'll fox the Rev. Ernest, and fox him good and plenty! Now I'll go find Strong ——

KING. But the deuce! I forgot that one of them's got to be a woman!

PREN. All right; I guess our friend Miss Hill will assist us. But you be sure to capture his specs, and not let him get too close to her, or there'll be a riot!—Now hustle along and do the Fagin act, while I coach up the rest of the cast. I'll wig-wag you when we're ready.

KING. All right. But for heaven's sake, don't make any slips! The poor old idiot is on the verge of nervous prostration now, and another jolt and he'll be jumping out of the window!

(*He goes out back* L.)

PREN. Good enough! By Jove, this is going to be one circus! Now that I know my dear uncle is hors de combat, I'm beginning to enjoy life once more! Hm! I have a notion that the rest of the troupe are in the library executing a clinch to soft music! I'll herald my approach by a little off stage business! (*He goes back* L., *and comes across the stage, tramping loudly, kicking over a chair on the way, and singing at the top of his voice.*) Ho, la, la!—tra, la, la!—tum, tidy, tum, tum! (*Rattles handle of door a moment, then kicks it open. Pauses, apparently abashed; in a surprised tone.*) Oh, *there* you are! Been looking everywhere for you! Can you come in here for a moment? I want your help, both of you. (*He crosses* L.) Oh, *very* clever!

Enter LES., *followed by* TED.

LES. Oh, *charmed*, I'm sure! What is it? Are you planning to get your friend out of jail? You know, I'm just sure that Ted could er,—persuade the judge to let him go!

PREN. No; that part's all right. The rah rah Indians rescued him at the critical moment, and are now boiling the police force in oil. But our friend his Reverence threatens to go off mad unless Rufe can produce a couple of singers to join his choir. Now we can't let him do that, because he's one of my uncle's strong cards; so, just to pacify him, Rufe wants you and me to pretend that we're singing, while he plays the Victrola behind that screen! See?

(*He finishes off triumphantly, very much pleased with his scheme.*)

LES. (*coldly at first; then working up to a climax*). *Indeed!* Oh, *really?* I *see!* So! I'm to stand up and make faces in front of a screen, while your friend plays a phonograph behind it? *Indeed!* Well! I'll have you to understand right now that when my voice reaches the stage when I have to go into the *moving picture* business, you can make your plans to have me sent right off to the old ladies' home; and if your smart friend will come around himself, I'll tell him what I think of his old plan in a way that he'll remember as long as he lives!

(*She flounces across stage* R., *and sits down on sofa, with her back turned.*)

TED (*grinning*). Gee, guy! But youse got in wrong dat time!

PREN. (*considerably wilted*). Oh, Lord, but I *am* clever! (*Suddenly.*) But—er—don't you understand, my dear Miss Hill, that my friend in his idea was thinking of *me* and my limitations! Of course, he had no thought of insinuating that *you* could not hold your own against any singer; but, you see, he knows that I'm such a dub and an ass and a blockhead that ——

LES. (*sweetly*). Oh, well, if *that's* the case, I'd be *charmed* to help you out!

TED. Dat's talking, kid!

PREN. (*aside, patting himself on back*). Oh, tact! Wonderful tact! (*Aloud.*) That's fine!—Now, about getting off this little deception. Of course, the Rev. Ernest knows us, and would be suspicious; but Rufe is going to try and make way with his spectacles, and I thought possibly that you might employ a veil or something as a disguise ——

LES. Oh, my *dear!* How perfectly lovely! Of course I can! Why, I've got *all* my make-up things right in my suit-case; in five minutes you won't *know* me! And I can fix you up with the most *beautiful* mustache; just take an old puff, you know, and ——

PREN. (*enthusiastically*). Oh, fine! Say, that's the right idea! And we can practice up some gestures, y' know, real operatic ——

LES. Splendid! Come; let's go to the library right now, and get started! And I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll ——

(*They go out rapidly front* R.; TED *stares after them a moment, then a broad grin spreads over his face.*)

TED. Say, I wonder where I come in on this, hey? I guess dey slipped one over on me dat time! I'll be lucky if I get a job as d' official announcer! Gee, though, it's going to be some show, believe me! I wonder where d' old gink is, anyway?

Enter KING, *back* L.

KING. Ah, Mr. Strong! Is everything going on all right? Where are the others?

TED. Dey's in d' next room, doing a quick change. Gee, guy, I'll bet youse won't know 'em when little Leslie gets through wid d' grease paint box!

KING. Grease paint, hey? By Jove, they are playing the game with a vengeance!

TED. Betcher life! Say, wen dat kid starts t' do a ting, she does it t' rights, guy! Believe me, some class!

KING. I'm sure of it! And—er—by the way, Mr. Strong, I hope that you have forgotten my extreme rudeness a little while ago; it was due to a most regrettable mistake, and I'm sure ——

TED. Say, kid, nix on dat stuff! I was just about t' ask youse t' slip me y'r mit becuz o' my being a bit hasty on starting someting widout putting youse wise t' who I wuz! So plant it dere, kiddo! (*They shake hands strenuously.*) And now we're all mixed into dis togedder, hey?

KING. We do seem to be engaged in a rather complex conspiracy. And now let's get everything ready for the show. I've made way with his glasses all right! (*He shows them, and crosses* R., *lays them on mantelpiece, then kneels in front of the Victrola, opening it.*) Would you mind bringing that screen over here?

TED (*getting screen*). Gee; it looks like I might be a stage hand, anyhow! But say, guy; I'd like t' get in on dis show! I wonder if dey couldn't woik me in as d' chorus? I'd show d' Rev. Oinest d' way it ought t' be done! (*He sets down the screen, and trips to front mincingly.*) "Oh, goils! Here comes d' duchess!" How about it, guy?

KING. I'm sure he'd be deeply affected! But remember; he's looking for vocal talent.

TED. All right! I'll sing f'r d' gink! (*Clogs violently.*) "Casey Jones,—mounted to d' cabin,—Casey Jones,—his orders in his hand,—Casey Jones ——" (*Stops short.*) Say! No kidding, guy, dere's too much class t' me t' ever break into any bush league choir! And besides, he wouldn't want me; I'd get a bigger hand from d' congregation dan he would!

KING. I think you decidedly would!—But at the present time, I think you'll have to hide your light under a bushel, and act as operator to the song factory. I'll have my hands full occupying the old gent's attention so that he can't watch the performance any too closely. And speaking of angels, I think I hear him coming now. You entertain him, while I go

get Barton to watch the front door in case of any more unexpected arrivals. (*He goes out front* L.)

TED. Entertain him, huh? Gee; I'd like t' give him a *real* entertainment! Well, here comes d' old duck; say, I wish I had a disguise, too!

(*He turns toward back* L.; FREY *enters, preceded by sounds of some one stumbling about. He gropes his way to the front of the stage.*)

FREY. Oh, oh, oh! Really, this is most embarrassing! I feel utterly lost! (*He runs into* TED.) Oh, is that you?

TED. Naw! It's not me! It's d' ghost of Napoleon Bonaparte, disguised as Carrie Nation!

FREY. Oh, I beg your pardon! I thought that you were Mr. King; but I judge by your voice that I was mistaken! You see, I am in a most distressing dilemma; I have very carelessly mislaid my spectacles, and without them I am entirely helpless! Really, I do not possibly see how I could have lost them! As I remember, I discarded them in order to bathe my face, and in the meantime they disappeared most miraculously! But dear me, I am so perturbed and unstrung that I am unable to think calmly, or I should try to trace them in my memory.

TED. Say, kiddo, but y're in hard luck! I'd like t' help youse, honest I would, but I ain't seen no goggles!

FREY. Thank you greatly for your kind interest; I feel sure, however, that I shall succeed in discovering them.—Let me see; where would I be most likely to lay them?—Ah, yes! Upon the mantelpiece, of course! Now, as I remember, the fireplace was on this side of the room ——

(*He starts groping to the right;* TED *heads him back.*)

TED. I'm afraid y'r memory's off dere, m' friend; d' place youse wants is just in d' other direction, see?

FREY. Ah, indeed? Thank you kindly! Now really, I would have been most positive that as one entered the room, it was on the left hand side! However, I shall search over here, as you advise! (*He starts* L.)

TED. Say! It's a crime t' take d' money off'n a guy like him!

Enter KING *front* L., *followed by* BAR.

KING. Ah, your Reverence! Down already?

FREY. Ah, it is Mr. King! At last! Such a relief! My dear sir, I am in a most perplexing situation! I have mislaid my spectacles, and I can no longer even clearly see my way about; in fact, I am quite helpless! You have not, perchance, observed them anywheres, have you?

KING. Why, I'm very much afraid that I can't be of any service, much as I sympathize with you. But don't worry; they'll be found, all right! I'll have Barton make a thorough search. By Jove, it's lucky that at any rate you won't need them to try out voices with, isn't it?

FREY. Really, you know, that is one of my greatest causes for perturbation! I must not only secure good singers, but must also ascertain whether the applicants are of eminent presentability. In the selection of a choir, you know, it is most imperative ——

KING. Oh, of course; I understand thoroughly! But couldn't you trust me to give you a description of the personal appearance of the applicants?

FREY. Oh, certainly! That would be an excellent way of removing the difficulty! I should be perfectly willing to have you vouch for them!

KING. Very well; I'll give you a word picture of each one. —And now, if you will sit down here, your Reverence, I think they will be ready to commence immediately! (*He seats* FREY *at extreme* L., *and crosses* R.; *aside, to* TED.) Is everything primed?

TED. To th' minute!

KING. Then crank her up! (*He opens the door, and beckons within.*) Good heavens! What have we here?

Enter PREN. *and* LES.; PREN. *is beautified with a ferocious mustache; he has removed his coat, and draped himself in a red window curtain;* LES. *has radically modified her coiffure, upon which she wears a bright table cover as a mantilla; she has removed her traveling coat, revealing a dark silk shirt-waist. Both are made up heroically.*

LES. Well! Do you think we'll make good?

PREN. Carramba! (*Twirls his mustache.*) Lead me before Cæsar!

KING. My word! A fine pair of choir singers you are! It's lucky he's so blind, or he'd die of heart failure in a minute! —Now see here! Don't either of you cross this line (*indicating*

the middle of the stage), or the jig's up. You won't bear close inspection! Now get ready, while I introduce you. (*He crosses to* FREY; PREN. *and* LES. *whisper together;* TED *puts a record on the Victrola.*) Your Reverence, they are here! Allow me to present to you Miss DeMario and Mr. Cheeso, the well-known oratorio singers!

FREY (*rising and starting across stage*). Ah, I am delighted to make your acquaintances; your names sound very familiar.

(KING *stops him at center of stage.*)

KING. I'm afraid that you can't shake hands with them now; they're very busy, er,—tuning their throats!

(*Escorts him back.*)

FREY. Ah, I understand! Er,—most necessary!—Then could you just give me an idea of their personal appearances, as you promised?

(LES. *and* PREN. *look up.*)

KING. Oh, certainly! With great pleasure! Miss DeMario is of medium height, very handsome figure, light hair and complexion, beautiful features, fine carriage;—altogether quite stunning, I assure you! (LES. *smiles, and waves her hand;* TED *shows approbation.*) On the other hand, Mr. Cheeso, though very respectable looking, is hardly to be called handsome; in fact, he is decidedly plain, his features are badly formed, he has no figure at all, he is a bit pigeon-toed and knock-kneed, and ——

(PREN. *breaks in excitedly.*)

PREN. A riverderci! A riverderci! Machen Sie schnell!

KING. Ah, indeed? (*To* FREY.) He says that they are ready, so let us give them our attention!

(*Sits down by* FREY.)

PREN. (*aside to* TED). All ready?

TED. Let her go!

PREN. (*stepping forward*). Ladies and gentlemen, we shall first sing for you La Gioconda Rigolletti, avec un morceau de Sans Souci! Prestidigito! Allons, mes enfants; prenez garde!

(*He and* LES. *strike expectant attitudes, as though ready to sing.*)

VICTROLA (*with the wrong record, as it gets under way*). Ur-uchh !—Skqrrrrr-trz !—rrrzzrr-strr-st —— Steamboat Bill, —sailing down the Mississippi,—Steamboat Bill ——

(PREN. *and* LES. *fall upon* TED.; KING *rushes across stage.*)

PREN. Shh ! Cut it ! Cut it !

KING. For heaven's sake, what *are* you doing ?

LES. My *dear !* Do you want to queer the whole show ?

TED. Well, youse didn't say not'in' except dat youse wanted good music, so I thought ——

KING. Hereafter don't you do any thinking; you crank the machine ! (*Glances hastily at record, and slips it on.*) Now, try again ! (*He crosses to* FREY, *who is greatly bewildered.*) I must apologize for the interruption; our neighbor's little boy disturbed the artists by breaking in with a very unsuitable obligato; however, it shall not reoccur ! Now, if you are ready !

PREN. Bona sera ! Ungewissershreinermacherheller ! Yip-i-addy-i-aye ! Fi donc ! (*He and* LES. *again take their places. The Victrola gets a flying start, and commences to render a xylophone solo of "The Palms." PREN. and* LES. *wait expectantly, and make several false starts but no voice appears.* PREN. *exasperated.*) See here; do you expect me to do an imitation of a set of chimes ?

LES. Well, I should *say* not !

KING. Lord ! Don't tell me that I've made a mistake ! (*Crosses* R.) Quick ! Stop the cursed thing ! (*Removes record, and reads title.*) "Xylophone Solo !" I *am* an idiot ! Well, this time there'll be no mistake ! (*He puts on a new record, after careful examination.*) Now go ahead ! (*Crosses to* FREY.) My dear sir, a very unfortunate mistake has taken place; the accompanist was rendering the wrong selection entirely, one quite impossible to sing, you know; in the key of C, all sharps and flats ! Most difficult to execute, you know, even on a piano !

FREY. Ah, yes, yes ! Most annoying ! But quite a common affliction, I'm very sure ! It gives us great trouble in all our choir work !

KING. Hush ! They're going to begin !

PREN. Sadofsky Il Trovatore Dingbat! Attendey! (*He and* LES. *strike poses; the Victrola commences, and begins to pour the duet from "La Boheme" out of its system;* PREN. *and* LES. *go through the motions with great energy, but little coherence;* FREY *is both delighted and nervous, and tries several times to rise;* KING *holds him back, and tries to distract his attention with a large photograph album. Suddenly the Victrola heaves a sigh and drops half a tone in pitch, then steadily sinks; the performers evince at first astonishment, then annoyance; they try to keep on acting, but when only a deep groan issues forth, they give up in despair,* PREN. *frantically tearing off his mustache.*) *Well?*

LES. I should *say* so! Well?

KING (*tearing his hair, and crossing* R.). *What* on earth is the matter?

TED. Don't blame me! I ain't touched it!

KING. That's just what's wrong! Wind the brute up; the mechanism has run down!

PREN. (*investigating*). That's easy to say; but I don't see any crank! And I've got a secret hunch that there isn't one here, nor within a hundred miles of here!

KING. You may be right! The machine only came from the factory yesterday, and probably it was left behind. Well, the jig's up! You see what your fine plan came to!

PREN. (*cheerfully*). Well, there's only one other thing to do, since all other aid fails us; we'll have to do the singing ourselves!

KING. Oh, fine! And then the Rev. Ernest would go swiftly on his way, and at once cause my uncle's license to be revoked, even if he didn't call in the police on the spot!

LES. (*freezingly*). Oh, *indeed!* Well!

KING. Oh, I mean, that is to say, if Mr. Prentice were to sing, or rather attempt to. You see ——

PREN. No, I don't see at all! Here you've been slandering my vocal cords, and you've never even heard them! Now you can shut up for a while; I'm going to sing, and if you object, why, then you can sing instead!

KING. All right! Just as you please! It's your funeral from now on. I'll pacify the victim until you're ready.

(*He returns to* FREY, *who is on the verge of nervous collapse.*)

LES. Oh, that will be *fine!* Now, what shall we sing?

PREN. How about "Billy"?

LES. N-o; it's got to be real highbrow;—though we could work in a *lovely* dance with "Billy"!

(*She hums, and dances a few steps.*)

PREN. Well, if it's got to be highbrow, it's got to be. Hm! See here—(*to* TED) what do you suggest?

TED (*decisively*). See here, guy, from now on youse leave me out'n dis deal, see? Every time I mixes wit' dis classic game, I strikes a backfire, and I'm *done*, see?

PREN. All right; don't get sore about it! (*To* LES.) We'll have to think up *something!*

LES. Oh, dear, I'm *sure* that ——

(*The door-bell rings.*)

PREN. *That* settles it! Here comes my uncle!

KING (*springing up*). It can't be! Remember the telegram. And don't worry; Barton will keep anybody else out.

Enter BAR., *back* R.

BAR. Hi'm sorry, sir, but there's a gentleman hinsists 'e has an appointment with Mr. Tetlow, and won't leave, sir!

KING. Good heavens! Surely *all* these people can't have mixed their dates! Show the gentleman up, Barton. (*He motions to* TED *to mount guard over* FREY, *which he does with alacrity; to* PREN.) See here, this looks devilish like the old gent was due to turn up!

PREN. Rot! He wouldn't have telegraphed if he hadn't made a sudden change of plan! Don't worry; I'm not going to. Here's the new member!

Enter IGNATZ DEMAREST ROGERS, *back* R.; *he is very artistically dressed, and carries a large roll of music in one hand, his silk hat in the other. He glances majestically around, then bows effusively to each and every person; he is, all in all, an extremely suave and polished proposition.*

IGNATZ. Ah, ladies and gentlemen! I greet you! (*Bows again.*) And may I make so bold as to inquire which of you is Mr. Henry Tetlow, Esq.?

KING. Why, I'm very sorry, but Mr. Tetlow is out of town; however, I am his nephew, Mr. King, and if I can be of any assistance ——

IGNATZ. Ah, yes! Thank you so much! His nephew, Mr. King! (*Bows again.*) And Mrs. King, I presume? (*Bows to* LES.; *much perturbation all around.*) Ah, no? A thousand pardons, I assure you, a thousand pardons! But may I make so bold as to introduce myself? My name is Demarest Rogers, and ——

LES. *Not* I. Demarest Rogers?

IGNATZ (*bowing*). Ah, yes, even so! Ignatz Demarest Rogers, of Schenectady!

LES. *Really!* The famous composer?

IGNATZ. Ah, indeed, you flatter me much, much too much!

LES. No, *indeed!* Why, *every*body knows who *you* are!

IGNATZ. Ah, mayhap, but ——

LES. Yes, *indeed!* Just think, it was you who wrote that perfectly *cute* song, "When I'm Thinking of Those Dreamy, Creamy Eyes"!

(IGNATZ *is overwhelmed; so are the others.* KING *breaks in abruptly.*)

KING. And you say, Mr. Rogers, that you had an appointment here with Mr. Tetlow to-night?

IGNATZ. Ah, no, not precisely. But he said that he would arrive home to-day, and I made so bold as to call at once! However, if you say that he is not here, I shall take my leave.

(*He bows all around.*)

KING (*moving to the door*). Really, I am greatly grieved that my uncle is not here to receive you, but ——

LES. (*grabbing* PREN. *by the arm*). Quick! Don't let him get away! Don't you see? He can suggest a song for us, and play our accompaniment!

PREN. By Jove, you're right! An angel unaware!

(*They hurry up stage;* PREN. *engages* IGNATZ *in an aside, while* LES. *draws* KING *forward.*)

LES. Oh, Mr. King, we're going to get Mr. Rogers to help us; so quick! Get Ernie away from the piano! That's a dear!

KING. I see! (*Crosses to* FREY.) My very dear sir, I regret unspeakably all this delay, and it must annoy you greatly, but it has been entirely unavoidable. We have been obliged to discharge the accompanist, because he could

not modulate the correct harmonic tempo of the dominant sonata ——

FREY. Dear me, how annoying! And quite unpardonable!

KING. Exactly! A most unheard-of situation! (*He takes* FREY'S *arm and pilots him across the stage,* TED *following.*) However, our new incumbent promises to be very satisfactory; he is a famous composer of symphonic arpeggios, and a past-master in the art of vocal orchestration!

FREY. Ah, indeed?

(KING *pushes him into a chair just by the corner of the mantelpiece, while* TED *moves the sofa forward so as to form a barrier; they both engage him in conversation.*)

LES. (*coming forward with* PREN. *and* IGNATZ). Oh, how perfectly *sweet* of you to help us out! And you say that you think that will be the best thing for us to sing?

PREN. You know, old man, we'd *much* prefer to sing one of your own things ——

IGNATZ. Ah, you flatter me too much, much too much! But since you say that you are not familiar with any of my works, I will make so bold as to suggest that you execute the one which I named. Now, let me see. (*He unrolls music, and moves toward the piano.*) Arranged as a duet, it would be most effective to ——

(*They discuss the execution aside.*)

KING. Yes, indeed! Why, he plays the harp and the violin both at the same time!

FREY. How extraordinary! Ah, it must be wonderful to be so talented!

KING. Wonderful! Wonderful! And the years of hard work and training it takes! They say that he lives for months at a time on a raw egg and milk diet when he's composing a masterpiece! (PREN. *waves to him.*) But I think they are ready to begin. Hush! We must be sure not to disturb them!

IGNATZ. All ready?

PREN. Fire! (*He and* LES. *get on their marks;* IGNATZ *indulges in an elaborate introduction, and finally gives the opening chords, nodding to* PREN. PREN. *sings.*) I wa-ander on as in a dream ——!

(*His voice is not so bad but that it might be worse; what he lacks in vocal excellence he makes up in physical exertion.*)

LES. The ear-rth a paradise would seem ——!

(*Her voice is just the same as* PREN.'S, *only more so.* KING *has a spasm;* TED *is greatly pleased;* FREY *cannot analyze his emotion, but seems to divine that something is wrong, and attempts to rise and investigate; he is dissuaded by the combined efforts of* KING *and* TED. PREN. *and* LES. *continue to sing alternate lines, gesturing while singing, and standing quiet while the other performs; they reach the chorus, and both sing together, gesticulating violently; the volume of sound is immense;* KING *sits on the sofa, watching breathlessly, apparently helpless from laughter;* TED, *highly elated, follows every movement intently;* FREY *is greatly perturbed, and tries several times to get past* TED, *who shoves him back once or twice, finally turning fiercely;* FREY *starts back and hits his head violently against the mantelpiece; he rubs his head, then passes his hand over the offending projection, and strikes his missing spectacles; with an exclamation of joy he puts them on and turns around;* PREN. *and* LES. *are on the last lines, and are standing with arms passionately outstretched toward each other;* FREY *observes, recognizes, gasps audibly, and seeks flight through the library door;* TED *hears the gasp, turns, and sees him disappearing; he calls to* KING, *and goes in pursuit,* KING *following precipitously.*)

PREN.
LES. } Lo-ve me,—and the wor-rld,—is mi-ne!

(*Amid a crashing climax from the piano, they throw their arms around each other, and indulge in a long kiss; at this moment* MAD. *enters back* L., *recognizes* PREN., *and starts back in amazement, concealing herself behind the window curtains.* IGNATZ *finishes with a flourish.*)

LES. Oh, Mr. Rogers, that was simply *fine!* I'm sure Mr. Frey —— (*She turns, and sees that the others have gone.*) *Well!* I like that!

PREN. Good heavens! They're gone! Something must be wrong!

IGNATZ. Ah, doubtless! And may I make so bold as to suggest that we follow and investigate!

LES. Oh, yes; do let's!

(*All three go out front* R., *hastily.*)

MAD. (*coming forward*). Oh, the perfect brute! To think! And after all his protestations! And I thought he was so ——

PREN. (*entering hurriedly*). Oh, Lord! He's found his specs! (*Sees* MAD.) Why —— By Jove! But I'm glad to see you again! Where did you run off to? (*She gives him a withering glance, and starts to sweep majestically up stage.*) But what the —— Won't you speak to me? I say, what's wrong? (*Pauses; aside.*) I know! She's trying to kid me! (*As she reaches the door, he whistles and calls after her.*) Look at me, birdie!

MAD. (*turning wrathfully, and coming down stage*). Birdie! Don't you *dare* call me such names! Oh, don't you ever dare speak to me again! You're a perfect brute, and a mean, hateful, deceitful thing! I just wish I could —— Oh ——!

(*She goes to pieces entirely.*)

PREN. Oh, but I say! Can't you tell me the cause of all this? What reason have you for ——

MAD. Reason? Then I suppose you don't consider it reason, and reason enough for me to hate you, that after all you said and told me such a short time ago, I should find you in the act of kissing a common, vulgar actress! Oh, I should think that you'd be ashamed of yourself to stand there facing me!

PREN. But see here; just a moment! Let me explain ——

MAD. Oh, you can explain it, can you? I suppose that she has engaged you to join her "act" as leading man, and you were rehearsing for the part!

PREN. No; but it was something on that order. (MAD. *sniffs.*) You see, this minister who is here simply has to get hold of two choir singers before to-morrow morning, so to prevent his being disappointed, Mr. King persuaded Miss Hill and myself to masquerade as applicants! So, you see, that explains it all; very simple!

MAD. Oh, very simple, is it? Well, I think that you're the simple one, to imagine that I'd swallow such a wild tale as that!

My goodness! Masquerading as a *choir* singer, draped in a bright red window curtain, and all made up with horrid grease paint! Ugh!

PREN. Oh, but that was only prompted by Miss Hill's artistic temperament, and ——

MAD. And I suppose it was *your* artistic temperament that prompted the realism of your acting!

PREN. On my word, I never ——

MAD. Oh, I don't want to hear any more of your excuses or explanations! They're quite useless! I thought great things of you, and that you were really fine and manly, but I see that I've been entirely mistaken and disappointed. It's all my own fault, of course, for trusting to first impressions; but now I see things in their true light, and all must be ended between us! From now on you must never see me or speak to me again!

(*She delivers this ultimatum heroically, and appears sternly resigned to her fate; however, she shows no intention of leaving the hated presence. As an accompaniment to her dramatic renunciation, the noise of the mob without has steadily and rapidly increased.* PREN., *in desperation, runs his hands through his hair, and tries again.*)

PREN. But see here! I can't let you throw me down utterly this way, without letting me defend myself! Won't you honestly believe what I told you? (*No answer.*) But at least if I can prove to you that all I said was the truth; that there is absolutely nothing between Miss Hill and myself except the agreement to carry out this deception? (*No answer.*) Won't you even tell me that you'll give me this chance? Won't you even answer me? Well, then, I suppose it's all off! I'm sorry if I'm bothering you; I'll beat it! (*He starts to go; turns.*) Won't you tell me good-bye? All right, then. (*He turns to go; at this moment the mob reaches the front of the house, suddenly grows quiet for an instant, then howls in unison, "We want Prentice!" Pandemonium reigns once more; the doorbell starts to ring, and continues to do so; a fistic assault on the door is heard.*) My God! They've got me!

MAD. What! Is *that you?* Are *you* ——! Quick! Why are they after you? Didn't you pledge yourself Alpha Psi?

PREN. No! Because I'd promised my uncle to go Zeta Epsilon!

MAD. And you never told me!

PREN. I forgot it!—And now I'm nabbed!

MAD. No, no! You mustn't be! They don't know you're here, do they?

PREN. Of course they do! Oh —— !

Enter KING *front* R., *then* FREY, LES., IGNATZ, *and* TED; MARY *enters back* L., BAR., *front* L.

KING. What in heaven's name —— !

(*The French window crashes open, letting in a stream of youths arrayed in sweaters and other rough-house paraphernalia, all whooping wildly.* MARY, MAD., *and* BAR *retreat behind table,* L.; PREN., KING, IGNATZ *and* TED *take stand by sofa;* LES. *shrieks, and throws her arms around* FREY'S *neck; he struggles free.*)

FIRST STUDENT. We want Prentice! Where's Prentice?

2D STUD. Yea! Here he is! (*Seizes* FREY.)

ALL. Wow!

(*They form a circle about* FREY, *and dance around him, howling with unholy joy.*)

FREY (*breaking loose*). Oh, I protest! I protest! This is most unseemly! I am the rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish, and I protest ——

ALL. Whee! Ray for the rector!

(*They continue as before.*)

KING (*interfering*). See here; I refuse to have my guest mistreated! Get out of here, every one of you!

1ST STUD. All right, Bill; but first we want a fellow that's here!

2D STUD. Yes, where is he?

ALL. Yes! Prentice! We want Prentice!

1ST STUD. Come on, now; tell us which of you is Prentice, or we'll wreck the house!

KING. I don't see any reason why ——

1ST STUD. That's all right; tell us which he is, quick!

ALL. Yes, yes!

KING (*stalling*). Tell me what you want him for ——

ALL (*breaking loose*). Shut up!—We want Prentice! Yea!

(*They crowd forward;* TED *meets them with a hostile pose.*)

TED. Say! What is it youse guys want?
ALL. Prentice! Yea, Prentice!
TED. Youse is sure youse wants him?
ALL. Yes, yes!
TED. All right; here I am!

(*A moment's shout, then dead quiet falls; two of the huskiest invaders slip behind* TED.)

1ST STUD. You're Prentice, are you?

(TED *hitches his shoulders and jaw forward, and nods scornfully in the affirmative.*)

2D STUD. Oh, *you!* At him, boys!

(*He claps his hands; the two huskies pinion* TED'S *arms from behind, two others catch up his feet; bedlam breaks loose as he is rushed through the crowd to the window.* KING *and* PREN. *try to go to the rescue, but are driven back by the crowd;* MARY *faints, to the consternation of* MAD. *and* BAR.; LES. *flings herself at* FREY, *who retreats in disorder, she landing in the arms of* IGNATZ, *who supports her, smiling blandly over her shoulder, as the curtain descends rapidly.*)

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same. The sound of cheering is still heard faintly in the distance.* MAD. *stands at the window, looking out;* PREN. *is seated on the sofa in an attitude of dejection. After a moment,* MAD. *makes an angry gesture, and comes forward.*

MAD. Oh, I think it's a perfect shame! I don't see how you could let them do it! I suppose you feel proud of yourself, allowing another man to be carried off by that howling mob in your place!

PREN. (*wearily*). Oh, yes! I feel proud; terribly proud! Happy, too; just like a little lark! Gee!

MAD. Yes, I should think that you would feel that you had done a *manly* sort of thing!

PREN. (*rising*). Oh, don't rub it in! You know I'd have stopped them if I'd had time to think! He brought it on himself; I wasn't entirely to blame! Besides, you were there; why didn't you come forward and tell them the truth?

MAD. That was not my place.

PREN. Yes, it was! You know most of them; you told me so! And they'd have believed you.

MAD. But it was ——

PREN. In fact, it looks to me as though you *wanted* me to escape!

MAD. Really, I don't see why you ——

PREN. And look here! I thought you said you were never going to speak to me again!

MAD. (*starting*). Oh, I—— (*Collects herself.*) Well, that's not the point now. This isn't on my own account; I'm trying to make you see that you have done a very unworthy thing, and I think that you ought to at least attempt to make some reparation.

PREN. But it's done now! What *can* I do to help it?

MAD. Go out and tell them who you are!

PREN. But that would be insane! There's no use giving myself up, because they're bound to soon find out who Strong really is, then they'll let him go! (MAD. *turns her back on him.*) Oh, well, then; if you insist, I'll go!

(*He strides over to the hat-rack and grabs his hat.* MAD. *clasps her hands delightedly, and turns to watch him. He goes to the window, looks out, claps hat on head, and dashes into the hall.*)

MAD. Oh! (*She runs up stage, and calls after him.*) Wait! Wait! (*He reënters suddenly, and she is covered with confusion.*) Oh, that is—— !

PREN. (*hanging up hat*). You don't want me to go? Is that it?—Isn't it?

MAD. (*retreating down stage*). I mean —— Well, I thought that perhaps you were right; that they'll find out that Mr. Strong isn't the man they really want, and then ——

PREN. Then it wasn't for my own sake that you wanted me not to go, but only because of my fine logic?

MAD. (*coldly*). Exactly; that was my only reason! (*Pauses.*) What other reason would I have?

PREN. I thought that you might have cared enough about me myself to have wished that ——

MAD. Oh, no, indeed, Mr. Prentice, I assure you that I have no personal interest in the affair whatever!

PREN. Why? Then were you just leading me on, bluffing me, during all that long trip? Just trying to see how much of an idiot you could make me be?

MAD. Not exactly, but ——

PREN. Then —— Surely you're not serious when you said you were through with me because of—er—what you saw?

MAD. Yes.

PREN. But the deuce! That was only a fake! We were only acting to help Rufe out; it was only a premeditated deception!

MAD. I can hardly believe a story that seems so unlikely, after what I saw!

PREN. But it's true! Why, Miss Hill herself will tell you ——

MAD. (*freezingly*). Please do not mention her name to me! I do not care to be reminded of her existence!

PREN. Why do you say that? Just because she happens to be an actress ——

MAD. Really, I cannot consent to remain here if you continue on the subject! I think that you have understood me thoroughly, and there is no further need of prolonging the conversation!

PREN. Oh, well! (*He shrugs his shoulders, and crosses* R.; MAD. *sweeps majestically up stage,* L., *turns at the door, and sees him throw himself on the sofa; pauses a moment, then throws a kiss at him, and runs off.* PREN. *grinds his teeth.*) Well, I suppose that's nothing to be surprised at, considering how the rest of the evening has progressed! But oh, damn it all! Why did this last have to happen? I could have stood all the rest, but —— Lord! Isn't there any way to prove that I'm all right? (*He pauses.*) Let's see! (LES. *enters front* R. *hastily; he turns away in disgust.*) The deuce!

LES. (*going up stage to window*). Oh, you can hear them still! Goodness, I wonder *what* they're doing to him?

(*She looks out.*)

PREN. (*aside*). There! Behold the cause of all my woe!—I wonder if I couldn't get *her* to help me out? By Jove, I'll tell her the whole story! (*Aloud.*) Er—Miss Hill ——

LES. (*coming down stage*). Yes?

PREN. Miss Hill, I'm sorry to say that I'm in trouble!

LES. What, again?

PREN. Yes, again; and I thought you might perhaps give me some advice. You see, the young lady I am engaged to unfortunately came into the room just at the termination of our little—er—masquerade, and she—er ——

(*He pauses, confused.*)

LES. Yes? Oh, I see! How *per*fectly lovely! And I suppose she thought we were in *dead* earnest?

PREN. Unfortunately she got that impression, and now she absolutely refuses to even speak to me!

LES. Oh, how perfectly *dear!* And now you want me to help you out?

PREN. Yes, that's just it! But—er—you see, she says that she won't listen to any explanation ——

LES. Not even from *me?*

PREN. Why,—no!

LES. The horrid thing!—Then how can I help you?

PREN. Why, I don't know; but, you see, I thought that if she should by accident come across you making love to somebody *else,* why, she might think that you were—er ——

LES. In the *habit* of doing it? Oh, I *see!* Won't that be perfectly grand! And then she'll forgive you and make up?

PREN. Exactly!

LES. Simply great! Now, who shall I begin on?

PREN. (*delighted*). Oh, anybody at all! But first let me call Barton. (*Rings bell.*) He can tell the young lady that Rufe wants her in the library, as soon as you get well under way.

LES. Fine! (BAR. *enters front* L.) Suppose I practice on him?

BAR. Yes, sir?

LES. (*seizing his hands; languishingly*). Mr. Barton, do you know, I think you have the sweetest eyes! Tell me, could you learn to love me?

BAR. (*spluttering*). Ho, my word! My word! Wot would the missis say? Ho, sir, make 'er stop, sir!

PREN. Oh, beautiful! I don't think you need any rehearsing, Miss Hill! Now, see here, Barton; you've got to help us out in a little scheme of ours. You must wait here until I give you the signal, then go call the young lady that's staying here, and tell her that Mr. King wants her in the library. See?

BAR. But, sir, really, sir ——!

PREN. (*pushing a bill into his hand*). Now, that will be all right; just do as I say!

BAR. Yes, sir! (*He goes up stage.*)

PREN. Say! I wish ministers and fiancées were as easy to soothe! Now to begin!

LES. Who shall it be?

PREN. Let's take a chance! (*Crosses to door* R.; *bangs on it and shouts.*) Hey! You, in there! Now I'll hide, and you do the rest!

(*He goes up stage and conceals himself behind window curtains with* BAR.)

Enter IGNATZ, *front* R.

IGNATZ. Ah, may I make so bold as to ask what is wanted?

LES. Oh, Mr. Rogers, you were just the person that I wanted to see!

IGNATZ. Ah, indeed? Indeed? Oh, I'm sure you flatter me too much, much too much!

LES. Oh, no, *indeed!* Do you know, Mr. Rogers, I've felt strangely drawn to you ever since we met?

(*She goes up to him, and lays her hand affectionately on his shoulder.*)

IGNATZ (*quite overcome*). Ah, really! Really! My dear Miss Hill, I ——

LES. Yes, *indeed!* And I know what you are going to say; that you have felt the same emotion?

IGNATZ (*eagerly*). Yes! Yes!

LES. I knew it! Oh, Mr. Rogers,—but may I not call you Ignatz?

IGNATZ. My dear lady! Of course. Of course!

LES. So *dear* of you! Come, do let's sit down on the sofa, —Ignatz! (*She draws him down beside her on the sofa;* PREN. *motions* BAR. *to go.*) Do you know, dear Ignatz, tha I have long felt that I was alone in the world, that I needed a strong arm to protect me; that if I could find a true knight, a brave man that I could love,—ah, me!

IGNATZ. Yes, yes! Go on!

LES. And then, when I saw you,—Ignatz,—my heart leaped with joy and gladness!—and I thought, ah, I dreamed ——!

IGNATZ (*in great excitement*). Yes, yes, dear lady, and your dream shall come true! My heart aches for you in your loneliness! Dearest, tell me; will you be mine?

(*He sinks on his knees before her.*)

LES. (*rising; dramatically*). Ah, this is too much! Much too much! My joy is overflowing! Ah, my darling!

(*She stretches out her arms to him.*)

IGNATZ. Oh-oo!

(*Squealing with joy, he stumbles to his feet, and flops into her arms; they stand entwined, he beaming blissfully over shoulder, she signaling frantically to* PREN., *who is convulsed.*)

Enter BAR., *gravely.*

BAR. Hi'm sorry, sir, but she habsolutely refuses to come, sir!

LES. (*detaching herself*). What? Well, the nerve of her! And here I've been mushing all over this soft-shelled peanut!

PREN. Yes, hang it all! I'm sorry you've wasted your energy, but it can't be helped!

IGNATZ (*dumbfounded*). But, my darling ——!

LES. Now, Ignatz, that will do! Run along and roll your hoop!

IGNATZ. Indeed, madame, am I to understand that I have been made a mock of?—Then I shall depart at once from this house, never to return!

LES. Gracious, what a blow!

(*He crushes her with a glance, then stalks up stage and out back* R.)

PREN. Well, *he's* gone! Now, Barton, you go back and tell the young lady that she's *got* to come; that Mrs. King has fainted in the library. See? (*He gives him another bill.*)

BAR. Yes, sir! (*He goes out back* L.)

PREN. Now, who next?

LES. I don't know. Perhaps the minister ——!

PREN. Not in ten million years, unless we handcuff him! (*The door front* R. *opens;* FREY *enters.*) But speaking of angels —— Quick, try him, anyway!

(*He conceals himself;* LES. *sweeps across the stage.*)

LES. Oh, your worship, do you know, you are just the person whom I was looking for!

FREY (*nervously, and trying to regain door*). Ah!—Really! —I, er,—you see, I was only seeking Mr. Rogers; we were discussing the subject of temperance, when to my great surprise he left the room ——

LES. (*getting between him and the door*). Yes, *indeed!* He was called away suddenly on business! But I'm *sure* you won't mind; you can talk to me instead! You know, I simply *love* to talk about temperance!

FREY. Ah, indeed! I would hardly have thought,—er, that is ——

LES. How *dear* of you! Do you know, Mr. Frey, I have felt strangely drawn toward you ever since we met?

(*Lays her hand on his shoulder.*)

FREY (*starting violently*). Oh, oh! Really, you know, I ——!

LES. (*seizing his hand*). Yes, yes! I know what you are going to say! That you have felt the same emotion!

FREY (*pulling away*). Oh, oh, oh! Really, I —— Dear me, I must ——!

LES. Oh, I *knew* that you had! Oh, Mr. Frey,—but may I not call you Ernest?

FREY. Oh, oh! My dear madame, really, as the rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Par ——

LES. That's a *dear!* Oh, *do* let's sit down on the sofa! (*She drags him down beside her on the sofa; he looks despairingly at the door.*) You know, Ernest, I ——

(*During the following, she holds him by the lapels of his coat, and continues to talk to him.*)

Enter BAR. *back* L.; PREN. *grabs him.*

BAR. (*in a hoarse whisper*). Beg pardon, sir, but the young lady's with Mrs. King *now*, sir!

PREN. Oh, the devil! Then tell her that Mr. King has been taken seriously ill, and that Mrs. King mustn't know of it!

BAR. Beg pardon, sir, but *Mr.* King's there, too, sir!

PREN. Oh! Then tell her there's a reporter here to interview her about her trip; tell her anything, only get her here!

BAR. Yes, sir! (*He goes out back* L.)

LES. Oh, yes! You know, I always feel so weak, so helpless, so alone and unprotected in the world! I feel the need of a strong arm around me, and a brave spirit to comfort me!

FREY. Oh, oh! Really, my dear madame, I am most grieved to hear that, I assure you! But—but really, much as I regret your position, I cannot see how I can be of any assistance except as a spiritual adviser!

LES. Ah, but do you not see? Have I not said that I felt drawn toward you; that something seems to tell me that you are the one for whom I have waited so long? (*Clasps her arms around his neck.*) Ernest, I love you!

FREY (*springing up; wildly*). Oh, oh, oh! Release me, madame, release me! Oh, this is most unseemly! Only fancy! The rector of St. Benedict's, Heathfield Parish, in the embrace of a female woman!

LES. (*pursuing him*). Yes! You are my affinity!

FREY (*retreating in terror*). Affinity! Oh, oh, oh!

LES. My own true Ruzzielamb!

FREY. Oh, oh!

LES. Dearest, we must be married at once!

FREY. Oh, gracious powers! Only fancy! Oh, oh! The brazen creature! Oh, my dear madame, surely you cannot be aware of the fact that I am already wed to a most worthy

person, and that I am the father of three bouncing children! Oh, oh! To think one should ask me to ——

LES. No matter! All that is nothing to my love! You must be mine, Ruzzie, my darling!

(*She throws her arms around his neck, and tries to kiss him.*)

FREY. Oh, oh, oh!

(*As he struggles to escape,* MARY *enters back* L., *and stands horrified.*)

MARY (*coming forward*). Good heavens, what does this mean? Mr. Frey, release this young woman at once!

FREY. Oh, my dear madame, you come in time!

MARY. Stop! Do not attempt to apologize! I am shocked that one in your position should conduct himself in such a manner under the roof of one of his friends! It will be my painful duty to inform Mr. Tetlow on his return that ——

FREY. But, I assure you, I—I was quite helpless, my dear madame! Only fancy! She addressed me as her "Ruzzie-lamb," and demanded that I commit bigamy! Oh, it is most—most ——!

LES. *Oh!* You think it is most most, do you? Well, *I* think it is most ungallant of you to shove all the blame on a *lady;* and I'll have you to understand that I'll call any one I choose my Ruzzielamb!

MARY. Yes, Mr. Frey, you display a very ungentlemanly spirit indeed! Really, I think it would be better if we withdrew, so as not to cause Miss Hill any further embarrassment!

FREY (*eagerly*). Oh, my dear madame, I assure you it would be most desirable that we retire, and—er—leave the young lady's presence! In fact, I entreat you!

MARY. I am glad that you perceive how you have compromised yourself. Let us go to the library. I shall see you later, Miss Hill.

FREY. Permit me, my dear madame!

(*He eagerly holds open the door for her, casts a last anxious glance at* LES., *and retreats, closing the door.*)

LES. *Well!* Of all the feeble-minded old koots I ever *saw!*

PREN. (*coming forward*). I heartily agree with you! Good heavens, I'm afraid our plan's going to fall through entirely! Who is there left?

(*The sound of singing is heard without, coming nearer.*)

LES. Gracious! I'm afraid it will have to be the butler!

PREN. You forget the "missis"!—By Jove, though, I'd like to see you pitch into Rufe! But we can't get hold of him!

LES. Maybe we could get a policeman! (*The singing suddenly breaks into loud cheering, much closer at hand and approaching rapidly.*) Gracious; what's that? Oh, they must be bringing my Ted back! (*She runs to window.*)

PREN. Fine! He's the very one! I bet he won't object!

LES. (*coming forward*). Oh, do you think they've done anything to him? Do you think he's safe?

PREN. Depend upon it! They seem happy enough! It sounds like a triumphal procession!

LES. Oh, *really?* Do you *really* think so? Oh, you *darling!* (*She throws her arms around his neck and kisses him.* MAD. *enters back* L.) I'll run call the others!

(*She hurries out front* R.; PREN. *looks after her and claps his hands together; he turns toward the window, to meet* MAD.)

MAD. (*freezingly*). Oh! Rehearsing again, I suppose? You appear to need a great deal of practice, although you do seem rather letter perfect! Pray don't let me interfere!

PREN. (*in despair*). Oh, *Lord!*

MAD. Barton told me that you wanted very much to see me. I suppose you wish to announce your engagement?

PREN. No! There's not a word of truth in it! You're mistaken all through! Miss Hill was just expressing to me her gratitude for ——

MAD. Oh! You must have done her a very great service!

PREN. Not at all! She —— Oh, you can't understand me, because you don't want to! (*The crowd, now directly outside, commences to sing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!"*) I give up! The fates are against me!

LES. (*rushing in, followed by* MARY *and* FREY; KING *and* BAR. *enter* L.). Oh, just listen! They must mean *him!*

(*She runs to the window, which she flings open, and waves to the crowd.*)

KING. Well, Pren, your substitute seems to have made a great success!

PREN. That's a lot more than I've done!

(*The door-bell starts ringing violently.*)

BAR. (*greatly agitated*). Shall Hi let them hin, sir?

KING. You'd better, or they'll try the window again! (BAR. *goes out back.*) Cheer up, old man; maybe this time they'll take you out with them and make *you* a hero!

PREN. I wish somebody'd take me out and kick me!

(*The door flies open and the tide sweeps howling in,* BAR. *borne on its crest,* TED *in its centre.*)

CROWD. "For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a——" (*Hoist him up on their shoulders.*) Whee! Ray! Speech, speech!

TED (*silencing them with a wave of his hand*). Chents! Youse flatter me too much, much too much! But f'r all dat, believe me, youse is all regular fellers! ("*Yea! Ray!*") An' I want t' tell youse right here dat next spring we's'll go over and trim dem guys wot tied d' can t' youse last season so bad dat dey'll never get out'n d' bush leagues d' rest of dere lives! (*Wild response.*) An' now, chents, I'll have t' slip youse d' mit f'r d' rest of th' evening, 'cuz I've got er date here wit' me friend wot runs d' joint!

(*Wild applause; he is set down, and shakes hands with his captors.*)

1ST STUD. All together, now, fellows; a long cheer for Coach Strong, then beat it!

2D STUD. All together, now,—one! two! three!

ALL. Raeton! Raeton! Raeton!
Rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah!
Strong! Strong! Strong!

(*Still cheering, they go out; as they reach the street, they start singing "Good-night, Ladies"; the outside door closes.*)

LES. (*at the window, waving*). Oh, the darlings! (*Comes forward.*) My *dear!* You're a real *hero!*

(*She throws her arms around* TED.)

TED. Say, kid, but dat's some crowd! Did youse tink I was lost?

LES. No, *indeed!*

TED. Dat's d' stuff! And now we's all happy again! Friends, I do myself d' great honor t' introduce youse t' me future partner in d' firm!

(*General exclamation.*)

MARY. Really? Let me congratulate you!

KING. And allow me ——

(*They all shake hands.*)

LES. Oh, and I'm sure Ernest will perform the ceremony; won't you, dear? (*She takes* FREY'S *arm.*)

FREY. Oh, really, my dear young lady, I should be most charmed, most charmed! I shall be unspeakably happy to see you—er—safely married,—and to this estimable young man!

TED. Say, kiddo, youse is on! Me friends, we's'll adjoin t' th' library, and I'll put youse all wise t' th' line of bull I slipped dose guys!

(*They all move* R.)

KING. It certainly seems to have been very effective!

TED. Say, it paralyzed 'em!

(*They go out;* PREN., *next to last, shuts the door swiftly, and faces* MAD.)

PREN. Well?

MAD. Oh! (*She goes across stage,* L.)

PREN. What have you to say now? Was I right?

MAD. Ye-es,—I suppose so!

PREN. You suppose so? Aren't you sure?

MAD. Yes, I meant that I was sure. It was my mistake!

PREN. And you forgive me?

MAD. Of course! There is nothing to forgive on *your* part ——

PREN. Then you still think of me as you did before? Everything is the same?

MAD. N-o,—everything isn't the same, yet—because—I still owe you an apology ——

PREN. No! No! It was very natural, after what you saw, to think ——

MAD. No, because I knew all along that you were only acting!

PREN. You did?
MAD. Yes ——
PREN. How?
MAD. Because it was such bad acting!
PREN. Then you really believed in me?
MAD. Yes!
PREN. (*taking her hand; softly*). And believe in me still? Enough to take a chance on always believing in me?
MAD. Yes!
PREN. My dearest!

(*He starts to embrace her;* BAR. *enters front* L., *observes, and splutters loudly.*)

BAR. Ho, my, sir! Hi beg pardon, sir! Hi've seen nothink hat all, sir; habsolutely nothink, sir! Hi was only going to hannounce dinner, sir! (*Crosses* L. *stiffly; aside.*) My eye! Hi must tell the missis! (*Throws open the library door.*) Dinner his served!
PREN. (*wrathfully*). My unlucky star is still on the job!
MARY (*entering front* R., *followed by the others*). Very well, Barton. Gracious, it's time! I'm sure you must all be starved! Your Reverence, will you take Miss Hill out? And Mr. Strong ——? (*Offers her arm.*) Rufe, you will have to come with the young people, since you are the odd man.

(*She starts out front* L.)

KING. Thanks! You honor me too much, much too much! —Come along, the rest of you! (*He follows the others out.*)
PREN. Wait! I must speak to you now!
MAD. (*crossing to fireplace*). Are you sure you can't wait till after dinner?
PREN. No! I won't leave this room till you've promised to marry me!
MAD. Goodness gracious! Don't you know that we haven't been introduced yet?
PREN. Oh, hang introductions! You know who I am, and I don't care who you are just so long as you'll say that you'll be Mrs. Prentice in the future!
MAD. Are you *quite* sure you don't care who I am?
PREN. Positive!
MAD. H'm! But just think! You're nothing but a freshman!

PREN. No, I'm not! Not by a long shot! Listen! I only came here because my uncle wished it, because it was either this or a consular berth in Russia, and I couldn't see Russia with a spy-glass. But now it's all different; I'll chuck college, and then we'll go to Russia together ——

MAD. But isn't it *terribly* cold there?

PREN. No, indeed! Steam heat, and all modern improvements; and think of the caviar!

MAD. But aren't you Mr. Tetlow's nephew? I understood that you were to be his heir, if you complied with certain conditions ——

PREN. Yes, and fine conditions they were! Why, he wanted me to marry a girl I'd never even met ——!

MAD. But you've never met me!

PREN. Oh, that's different! This was some special protégée of his, a perfect fright, just the sort of a lemon that an old fossil would pick out as a pippin!

MAD. Oh, indeed!

PREN. Yes; and rather than consent to marrying her, I let the old gent disinherit me!

MAD. And you'd throw away the chance to become a rich man just for me?

PREN. Yes! I'd even throw away the chance of a college career for you!

MAD. Noble youth! We-ll,—I suppose you know best ——

PREN. Then you'll marry me?

MAD. Per-haps!—I'll think about it at least,—though,—it hardly seems fair to the girl your uncle wants you to take!

PREN. Oh, deuce take her, anyway! What's the use of considering a frump of an old maid? (*He seizes her hand.*) Promise me that you'll marry me!

MAD. And go to Russia?

PREN. Yes!

MAD. (*dreamily*). I always *yearned* to go to Russia!

PREN. You angel!

(*He grabs her in his arms, and kisses her; as he does so, the outside door is heard to slam, and footsteps are heard.*)

TETLOW (*off stage*). Barton! Hallo, Barton!

PREN. Good God! My uncle!

(*He dashes to table and turns out light.*)

MAD. But what do you care if he does see you?

PREN. Rufe! He'd be in an awful mess! Quick, into the library!

Enter TET., *back* R.

TET. What's this! No lights? I thought I saw them from the street! (PREN. *stumbles.*) Who's that? Quick, speak out! (*He springs to the desk in corner back* R., *fumbles in drawer, and comes forward.*) Throw up your hands! (*He flashes a pocket searchlight and levels a revolver at* PREN., *who throws his arms around* MAD., *to shield her; a pause;* TET. *switches off the light.*) Oh! Pardon me! You needn't! But if there is no objection, I'll turn up the light and see who you are! (*He moves toward the table.*)

PREN. (*in a whisper*). Quick! The door!

MAD. No,—wait! (*The lights flash on.*)

TET. And now if —— Clarence! And you! Well, well, well! (*He gazes at them, stupefied.*)

PREN. (*defiantly*). Yes, my dear uncle, you find me beneath your roof, in spite of all your commands! However, you'll be happy to learn that I intend to take my departure at once!

TET. Why, you mustn't run off like that, my boy!

PREN. I'm sorry; I know why you say that,—because you want me to stay and meet your protégée, whom you have kindly selected as the proper wife for me; but I might as well tell you here and now that I'm already engaged to be married to a girl of my own choice!

TET. But what the dickens do you mean, then, by embracing this young lady? You young rascal, what do you mean ——

PREN. I mean that she is to be my future wife!

TET. What? (*Stares in blank astonishment; then sees.*) Why! Ho, ho, ho!

PREN. What the devil, sir!

TET. Hold on! Don't you even know who you are engaged to?

PREN. Of course I do!

TET. Then —— Well, well; it makes me very happy, all the same, no matter what game you're working on me! My dear Madelaine ——! (*He goes over and takes her hand.*)

PREN. *Madelaine!* Why ——!

MAD. I said you should have been introduced first!

(PREN. *stands amazed; the others enter front* L.)

MARY. What *is* the matter? Uncle! Here at last!

(*Kisses him.*)

TET. Yes, here I am! Glad enough, too! But come; do you all know the good news?

KING. What's that?

TET. Look!

(*He points;* PREN. *and* MAD. *are standing close together beside the fireplace. They look up, confused, as the others turn toward them.*)

MARY. Oh, yes! Of course we knew!

PREN. What! You knew all along?

MARY. Of course!

KING. Don't you believe it! She only knew a moment ago, when I told her!

PREN. Then, young man, you're in for the finest thrashing you ever had!

KING. Oh, no, I'm not! Don't blame me for knowing what some one else told me! I'm not the guilty party!

PREN. Then who the deuce is?

KING. Behold the culprit! (*He points at* MAD.)

PREN. You!

MAD. No, no!

PREN. Then *who* is?

MAD. (*confusedly*). Oh ——! I —— There!

(*She points at* FREY.)

FREY. Oh, oh, oh! Really, my dear sir, I assure you I had nothing whatever to do with it; nothing whatever, I assure you!

TED. Dat's right! He's not d' guy! I'll be d' goat again; last time I was made a hero f'r it!

LES. Yes, *indeed!* and you will be this time; won't he, dear? (*She takes* FREY's *arm affectionately.*)

FREY (*slightly perturbed*). Oh, undoubtedly, undoubtedly!

PREN. Well, I don't care! I'll forgive everybody! I've been the goat the most of any of you, but I've gotten the best reward, so I'll make no protest! (*He takes* MAD.'s *hand.*)

KING. Bravo! And now that we're all a happy family

once more, I'm sure that Mr. Frey will give us his blessing, and then ——

FREY. Oh, certainly ; with the greatest of pleasure, I assure you ! Bless you, bless you ! (*Pauses ; looks around uncertainly at all.*) And now, if I might suggest it, the—er,—dinner ——? (*The curtain falls swiftly.*)

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